

THE BOY WITH THE U.S. TRAPPERS



FRANCIS ROLT-WHEELER



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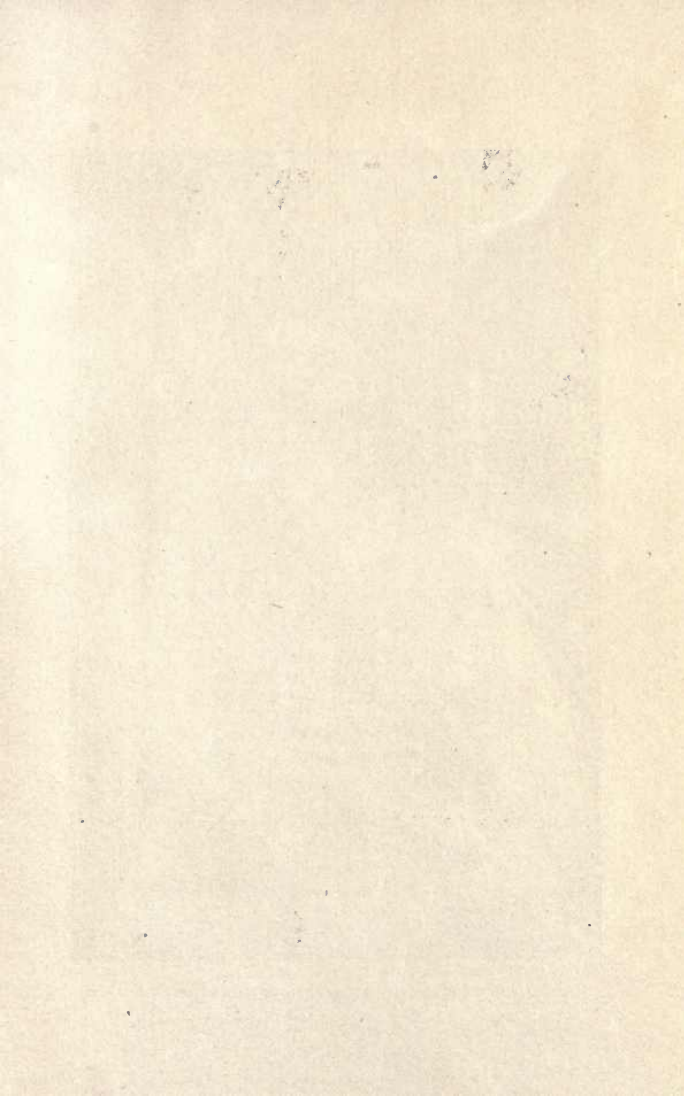
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A CALIFORNIA HUNTER AND TRAPPER OF THE PIONEER DAYS.

U. S. SERVICE SERIES.

THE BOY WITH THE U. S. TRAPPERS

BY

FRANCIS ROLT-WHEELER

With Forty-four Illustrations from Selected Photographs



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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THE BOY WITH THE U. S. TRAPPERS

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FOREWORD

The Author desires to acknowledge the courtesy and assistance of Mr. E. W. Nelson, Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey, of Mr. J. S. Ligon, in charge of Biological Survey work for the state of New Mexico, and of hunters and trappers attached to the Survey.

Also acknowledgment is made to the various sportsmen's magazines throughout the country, both for permission to use data as well as photographs from these publications, notably, *Forest and Stream*, *Outing*, *Field and Stream*, and *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*. Reference also is made to the assistance of the trapping publications of A. S. Harding, notably "Wolf and Coyote Trapping," "Steel Traps," "Deadfalls and Snares," and "Fifty Years a Trapper," also to Andersch Bros.' "Hunters' and Trappers' Guide," and to Agnes Laut's "The Story of the Trapper."

PREFACE

The trapper has ever been the symbol to America of robust manhood and of the desire to press forward the ideals and the civilization of the United States to their farthest bounds. No country has been too wild or rugged for him, no venture too daring, no peril too great. Many of the frontier heroes of America were trappers and hunters.

The lure of trapping is not gone, on the contrary, as game has become scarcer and the requirements of modern life sterner, trapping has become more difficult. In no field is this difficulty greater than in the work undertaken by the U. S. Biological Survey, which has set itself the task of controlling the predatory animals of the country, the ravages of which cost the stock-raisers and farmers of the United States tens of millions of dollars yearly.

There is need for the alert and wary woodsman, to-day, as there ever was. There is need for young fellows of bravery, determination, and

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the love of the wild in their veins. To show the boys of America how splendid is the work of the Government trapper, to present the cunning of the hunted animals, to show the conditions of modern trapping, to explain the latest and most approved methods, and, above all, to give a new insight into a virile and thrilling occupation, done, not for gain, but for the betterment of the United States, is the aim and purpose of

THE AUTHOR.

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THE BOY WITH THE U. S. TRAPPERS

CHAPTER I

GHOST CANYON

GAVAN sat on an outcrop of rock, his back against the cliff, his rifle across his knees. Although generally impervious to fear, he now felt horribly afraid.

The sun, rapidly nearing the distant horizon of the Jemez Mountains, seen through the perspective of the canyon, threw long shadows from a small cairn of stones, hastily piled up by the boy's hands. It was all that he had been able to make for a grave.

Thirty feet farther down the slope lay the body of a mountain lion, the last glinting rays of the sun turning to orange the tawny skin of the animal.

Young though he was, Gavan Keary would usually have faced a night's watch in the moun-

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tains without a qualm. Here it was different. Ghost Canyon was a spot that even the most reckless of cattle-punchers avoided after nightfall.

In spite of all terrors, natural or supernatural, Gavan's duty seemed to him clear. Not until the morning sun rose on the canyon would he be justified in leaving the grave, beneath the stones of which lay his cousin's mangled body. "Blue Joe" Keary had been a hard man and rough, but he had been an efficient protector to the lad for several years, and Gavan felt woefully alone.

It seemed incredible that so old a hand as Blue Joe, so consummate a shot, so keen a hunter, should have come to his death from a mere "varmint," but the exploded rifle which Gavan had propped up against the grave told the tale. Dead his cousin was, without a doubt. Now, befall what might, it lay upon Gavan to see that the body was not desecrated.

Ordinarily, Gavan would have been satisfied to tramp around the grave a few times to put the hated man-smell on the place as a protection against any of the prowling creatures of the wild, but Ghost Canyon was not like any other place in the mountains. Strange creatures were said to haunt that region by night, creatures which

would pay little heed to a rifle shot. None the less, despite his superstition, Gavan felt solid comfort in the knowledge that he had his rifle with him and more than enough ammunition.

Between where he sat and the pile of stones that he was watching, the ground, with its alternation of juniper, sage-brush and prickly-pear, was blotched with red stains, now turning black, and the soil itself showed the marks of a struggle. The ruddy glow from the sunset sky made plainly visible the footprints, hoof-marks and cougar tracks which explained the tragic story.

Of book-knowledge Gavan Keary possessed but little, but he was an apt scholar in that great book of which every day and every night inscribes a new page—the book of woods life. Tracks are not easy to read, even for the expert—it is only the tenderfoot who thinks they are—but Gavan had pieced out the story, mark by mark, until he knew what had happened almost as clearly as though he had seen it all with his own eyes.

Although mountain lions were not uncommon in that part of New Mexico, several having been treed by dogs in cottonwoods or yellow pine trees and then shot by the hunters, this one was the very first that the boy had seen. He had observed the

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tracks of the great cat numberless times, but, as Gavan knew well, it is one of the shyest of all animals, hunting by night, or during dusk and dawn. It takes good, especially-trained dogs to rout out a mountain lion, or cougar, and run him down.

This animal, now lying dead at the edge of the piñon thicket down the hill, had committed an unpardonable crime. It had killed a young and valued colt in the home corral, and Blue Joe Keary had vowed he would not rest till he had secured vengeance.

He had secured his vengeance, indeed, and he was at rest.

It had been a bitter fight, a fight to the death. Not only was the hunter slain, not only was the cougar killed, but the two dogs had been killed also. Gavan had laid the bodies of the two faithful hounds at Blue Joe's feet and covered them also with great stones, not without the thought that there must be a place, somewhere, for dogs that had given their lives to try to save their masters.

Duff, the boy's own dog, a nondescript with a good nose and an astonishing gift for following a trail, but unfortunately possessed of a strong

yellow streak, was stretched out on the ground, his head between his paws, sniffing uneasily. Gavan's pony, hobbled, was grazing at the scanty herbage a couple of hundred yards away.

Events had happened swiftly since the early part of the afternoon, when Blue Joe's horse, riderless, came tearing home to the corral. The boy had been conscious of a presentiment of evil all the day, and Duff had been behaving queerly. Two or three times, shortly after midday, the hound had set up a long, high howl, mournful in the extreme, not unlike the howl of a coyote. Gavan had tried to pacify his inner fears with the thought that it was only because Duff had been left behind from the hunt that he expressed himself thus distressfully, but in his heart of hearts, the boy knew otherwise.

Woods-wise, he knew that animals have a curious prescience of disaster. He remembered how Si Buckthorne's dog had broken away from his cabin the day that his master's horse put his foot in a badger hole and fell, breaking his leg and throwing his rider heavily on a boulder; and how the dog, after finding the wounded man, had made his way back to camp and led a rescue party to the place. He had heard how the former

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sheriff's dog had howled the long night through on that famous raid when a vigilance committee had tried conclusions with a gang of cattle-rustlers and several men on both sides had bit the dust, the sheriff among them.

Wherefore, when Duff suddenly took to howling in the middle of the day, Gavan had grown uneasy, his fears being further heightened by the return of Blue Joe's horse without its rider.

It had taken him but a few minutes to catch and saddle his own pony, to stuff some pan-bread in one pocket and a bottle of cordial in the other and to set off in the direction of Ghost Canyon, in which general direction, he knew, his cousin had started off that morning. After a couple of hours' riding, Duff had picked up the trail.

The keen-nosed dog had led the boy to a hole in the rocks and there his yellow streak asserted itself. He bayed outside, but would not go in. This had put Gavan in a predicament. Though by no means lacking in courage, he realized that it would be foolhardy for him to creep on all-fours into such a place, for he could not see to use his rifle and if, as was possible, the she-cat were there and there were cubs in the den, even

the natural cowardice of the mountain lion would not keep her from giving fight.

In this strait, Gavan thought of a plan he had heard recounted by Quick Feather, the old Indian hunter who lived in Taos pueblo, and who had some farming land near the Keary Ranch. Rapidly interlocking the twigs of a couple of branches together, so that they formed a rack somewhat like a flat basket, he laid dry sticks thereon and set fire to them, finally, when they were blazing, throwing on the fire some growing shoots of rabbit-brush. This sent up a thick, choking smoke. Then, with a long piece of sapling—to get which he had been forced to make a considerable climb down into the ravine—Gavan thrust the smoking mass far into the cave, then jumped to one side with his rifle ready, in case any animals should come out.

The ruse failed utterly. Not a growl, not a snarl, not even a spit, came from the cave. Evidently it was empty. The dogs must have routed out the mountain lion from its den, earlier in the day.

Circling round, making wider and wider casts, Gavan kept Duff at work until at last the dog found the trail again and set off, giving voice

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with the deep bay of a mongrel hound. Since there were no signs of blood on the trail, Gavan judged, and rightly, that the dogs had run far in advance of Blue Joe, and that the cougar had been started before the hunter had come within gunshot.

For a short distance the trail seemed easy to follow, for Duff ran along steadily, never at fault. Yet Gavan felt puzzled. Why did the trail continue toward the upper, rocky slopes? A mountain lion, driven from its den and chased by dogs—which can outrun it—almost invariably makes for the timber, where, like any other cat, it runs up a tree. The animal thus treed, the hunter has ample time to ride up, and a clean rifle shot ends the career of the beast of prey.

Instead of turning down creek toward the timber, however, it was evident from the trail which Duff was following, that this mountain lion had traveled at a good speed over the stony slopes, difficult ground for the pursuing dogs and even more hindering for Blue Joe's cow-pony. The slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are rough in the extreme.

Either this particular mountain lion had been hunted before, the boy premised, or else it pos-

sessed an instinctive wisdom. As Gavan well knew, every wild animal is an individual as well as the unit of a species. It is never safe to assume that the general customs of any given species of wild animal will always be carried out by every member of that species. Every animal has a separate and distinct personality, if not to the same extent as Man, at least in the same manner. This mountain lion, for example, was keeping away from the temptation of a refuge in the timber as clearly as though it understood what danger lay therein.

As Gavan rode hard after Duff, halting when the hound lost the trail and dashing on when he picked it up again, the boy seemed to see clearly before him the scene that had been enacted over this same ground but a few hours before. He could conceive the tawny, half-visible body of the cougar, streaking along the mountainside with long, lithe cat-like runs and leaps; the hounds, their tongues hanging out, eager for the prey, laboring over the rough ground which impeded their speed; behind, Blue Joe, on his pony, spurring viciously and grumbling fiercely because he feared that the mountain lion might escape.

Over the saddle-back and on the down slope

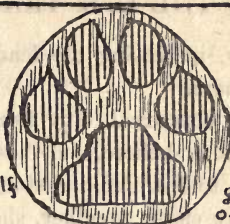
of the next mountain the ground opened out into a characteristic mountain meadow, green and grassy. Duff struck straight across. On the farther edge of the stretch, Gavan pulled up swiftly. A small patch of blood was visible, at which the dog sniffed uneasily. The ground was too hard to show a mark, but it was evident that one or both of the dogs had overtaken the chase, the level ground having given their greater speed its opportunity.

There were not signs enough to show exactly what had happened. Either one of the dogs had got a grip and wounded the cougar, or, as seemed more probable, one of them had leapt for a grip and been tossed off with a sidewise slash of that cruel head. The boy knew well enough that the cougar would not challenge in the open, that he would not turn at bay unless cornered. It seemed sure, therefore, this blood showed that one of the two dogs was wounded.

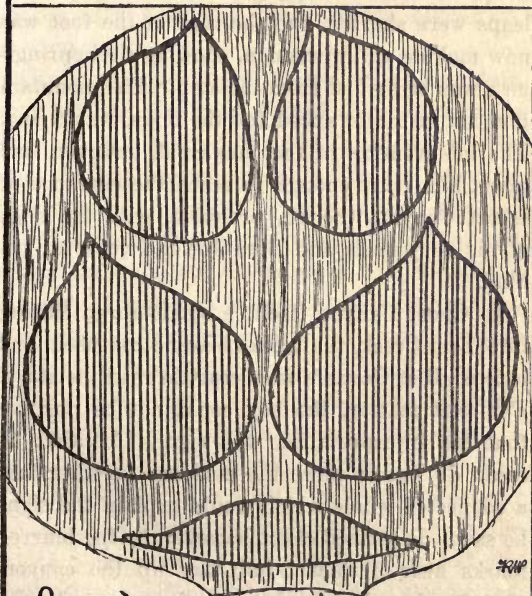
On the farther side of this stretch was a welter of rocks and thence the trail led into some chaparral, all low scrub, mainly of Arizona live oak, willow and gnarled blue spruce, without a single tree large enough to bear the great cat's weight. Through this tangle the lithe body of the cougar

Domestic
Cat.

Bob-cat is
about one-half
larger.



Cougar track
is similar
to this, but
in size is
slightly lar-
ger than that
of lynx below.



Canada or True Lynx (Winter)

slipped easily, increasing the lead between him and his pursuers.

Beyond the chaparral, only faint tracks were to be seen here and there, and these, though difficult to read, told a definite story. The round cat-prints were closer together, showing that the leaps were shorter, and the rear of the foot was now making an impression, showing that springiness was being lost from the step. The mountain lion, no match in speed for the dogs, was tiring. The intervention of the chaparral, however, had given him start enough to reach the entrance of Ghost Canyon, though, probably, with the dogs at his very heels and Blue Joe not very far behind.

In Ghost Canyon itself, a small gorge cutting into Tom Creek, the tracks became confused, and it took all of Gavan's woodcraft to read the story. For that matter, the boy could not be positive that his interpretation was right. All that he could do was to piece the evidence together into a connected whole which would explain the signs he saw. It seemed clear, however, by the blurred marks near a thicket half-way up the canyon, that the dogs had again overtaken the mountain lion and pinned him down.

Just at this point, the hoof tracks showed clearly where the pony had been stopped suddenly. Footmarks revealed the fact that Blue Joe had dismounted. This could only be for the purpose of taking a long shot at the mountain lion before the animal made good its escape into the thicket. The ravine of Ghost Canyon, higher up, was impassable.

This should have been the end of the mountain lion, for Blue Joe was a dead shot. Evidently, however, the animal was half hidden or the hunter's aim was not true, for Gavan, when he had examined the body of the cougar, had observed a deep flesh wound where the bullet had plowed through, four inches above the joint of the fore-leg, at which point a shot directed for the heart should have penetrated, and thereby have saved his cousin's life.

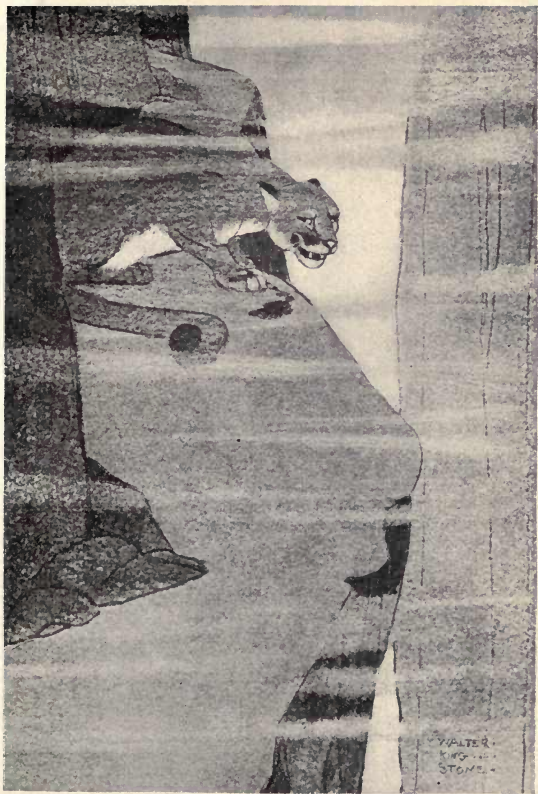
The actual cause for this ineffective shot could not be traced, but Gavan guessed that perhaps his cousin had been afraid to fire low for fear of shooting the dogs. Still more probable was the likelihood that the hunter had kept the bridle of his pony over his arm when firing, lest the horse should bolt at the hated smell of the cougar, and that, just at the moment of pulling the

trigger, the pony jerked his head, deflecting the hunter's aim.

Wounded by the bullet, and, apparently, with one if not both of the dogs hanging on to him, the mountain lion had bounded into the thicket.

The scene in the thicket was largely a matter of guesswork. The wounds in the cougar's neck showed that one of the dogs, at least, had secured a powerful grip. This grip, however, had been partly broken, or at least weakened, by the dragging underbrush. The other dog, probably, had pinned the animal, for, as the ground showed, the cougar had rolled over. Unwitting of the terrible claws, the leading dog had tried to shift his grip higher on the throat, but he was not quick enough, and the sickle-like claws had torn away almost the whole side of the dog's head and neck. With one enemy thus disposed of, the cougar shook off the other.

This was, undoubtedly, only a matter of a few seconds, but it gave Blue Joe time to come up. He was leading his pony, ready for another shot, for, undoubtedly, the howls of the wounded and furious dogs told him that the mountain lion was at bay. The hunter advanced slowly. He knew that, however eager the cougar may be to dodge



Courtesy of "Field and Stream."

DEATH IN THE PATH.

Only the most reckless hunter will close in on a wounded cougar. This drawing is of a puma, the southern name of the lighter-colored species of cougar.

a fight, when cornered he is a very dangerous foe.

When he had reached within a few feet of the thicket, the infuriated and wounded cougar, his green eyes blazing, his ears laid back, bloody foam on his jaws, sprang out from the bushes on the hunter. Blue Joe had not been expecting this, for rarely does a cougar charge. He threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired at point blank range.

The gun, an old weapon, exploded, either from a weakness in the metal resulting from years of use, or because of a defective cartridge.

In a second bound, the cougar was on him.

Evidently Blue Joe, in a reflex action of self-defense, must have tried to use the butt of the gun as a club, for the weapon was bent as though it had been used for a blow, but, as Gavan surmised, there had been no sweep for the stroke, for though it fell, and fell fair, it failed to break the great cat's backbone.

The tracks now became too confused for the details of the story to be clearly read, but it was evident that Blue Joe had been thrown to the ground by the shock of the animal's spring, even though the force of that leap had been partly deflected by the blow from the gun-butt. Whether the hunter had tried to jump back and missed his

The sharp teeth of the wounded feline had ended the unequal battle and it had crawled toward the thicket to hide and die. Loss of blood and the deep internal wound caused by Blue Joe's hunting knife, however, had prevented the mountain lion reaching this place of secrecy, and it had died before finding shelter.

When Gavan reached the fatal place, guided by Duff, the strife had been over for hours and the bodies lay stiff. His cousin was crumpled sidewise on the bloodstained ground; one of the faithful hounds had crawled forward, when dying, to give a last lick to his master's hand; the cougar lay dead at the edge of the thicket; the other hound was stretched out in the bushes. Hunters and hunted alike had found a surcease to their mutual hate.

Thus the boy read the story from the confused tracks on the ground, from the exploded and battered rifle, from the character of the wounds upon the bodies of the slain, and from the hunting-knife still clenched by the rigid grasp of death in the hunter's hand. Possibly the actual sequence of events might have been different in several details, for the tragedies of the wild rarely happen

twice in exactly the same manner, but the main facts were there.

As soon as he had definitely decided that Blue Joe was dead and that it would be in vain for him to ride the necessary thirty miles to bring a doctor from Taos, Gavan set himself to pile a heap of stones over the body in order to keep away any marauding animals, though, as he knew, there are few creatures that will touch man-flesh, and none—not even the coyote—will do so in summer, when other game is plentiful. Turkey buzzards, however, are not so particular.

This duty done, Gavan was ready to ride to XO ranch, on which the tragedy had taken place, to give information of his cousin's death, in case the coroner at Taos should deem it necessary to make an investigation. Just as the lad was setting foot to stirrup, however, the thought occurred to him that while the precautions he had taken were ordinarily quite sufficient, conditions here were a little different.

He was forgetting that this was Ghost Canyon!

Strange stories were told about this place. Creatures that seemed neither animal nor human were said to haunt the Canyon, deeds that were

footing or whether the mountain lion had actually clawed him, nothing remained to tell.

Blue Joe had been hurled violently backwards, that much was clear. If he had been able to turn on his face as he went down, he might have saved his throat, but the hunter had evidently at the same time drawn his hunting-knife.

This move, which Blue Joe had designed as a last means of saving his life, was the cause of his losing it. Had he simply twisted as he fell, landed face downwards and lain still, his head drawn in as close to the shoulder-blades as possible, undoubtedly he would have been terribly clawed about the shoulders and scalp, but, equally probably, he would not have been killed.

A man lying on his face exposes no vital part to a clawed animal. A man lying on his back will be almost surely torn in pieces. There are numberless cases in which men, who have been attacked by wild animals they have wounded in the chase, have saved their lives by this simple defense.

Blue Joe, however, had not been thinking of escape by this passive method. He was still fighting. In drawing his knife and striking upwards at the cougar as he fell—a most compli-

cated group of motions, when analyzed—he had not been able to twist over and fall directly on his face, but had struck the ground sidewise. The blade of the hunting knife had sunk deep into the animal's body, causing a mortal, but not immediately fatal, wound. It had not reached the heart.

The added pain, however, had increased the mountain lion's ferocity, and it had clawed and bitten its victim, one of the claws ripping into the soft flesh at the side of the throat and cutting the jugular vein, and, probably, the external carotid artery. The size of the blood-pool in which Gavan had found his cousin suggested that death had been speedy and painless. At least Blue Joe had not suffered the agony of being mangled and conscious withal.

The remaining dog, the one which had first been wounded in the shoulder, and which had been thrown off during the fight in the thicket, had leapt again at the cougar while the latter stood upon its victim, tearing him. Of this last tussle there was little clew save the terrible wounds made by the hound's teeth in the neck and throat of the cougar, and the raking gashes of the great cat's claws which had literally torn the dog to death.

only told in whispers were always located here. There was the story about the Wolf-Woman who—

Gavan shivered and swung into the saddle.

The feel of the pony beneath him, however, quickly checked his fear and he reined in. It was not far from sunset, now.

The boy looked back at the cairn of stones and hesitated. If he should gallop away from Ghost Canyon because of his superstitious fears, and, in the morning, the grave should be disturbed, how could he forgive himself? The mere idea of staying in that haunted spot the whole night through sent a prickling sensation down the lad's back, and gave him a hollow sensation of fear as though he had not eaten for several days.

But he turned back into the canyon, dismounted, unsaddled and hobbled the pony. He threw some more stones on the pile, to make it all the safer. Then, taking advantage of the waning light, he hunted for a place whence he could watch without being too conspicuous himself, and where, at the same time, he could not be taken by surprise from the rear. The friendly sound of the rushing waters of Tom Creek not more than two hundred yards away, sounded in his ears.

Then, whistling Duff to his side—though, indeed, the dog showed little desire to be away from his young master—Gavan settled himself in this niche with his back to the cliff, saw that his rifle was in order, and commenced a frugal supper from the pan-bread and bacon that he had put into his pocket in case Blue Joe should have been in need of it. Before he had finished eating, the twilight was faint in the western sky and the stars had begun to show their shining. Night had come.

Ghost Canyon, like any other place in the wild, was full of night sounds. Never until that night had Gavan realized so acutely the myriad voices of nature. He had known, vaguely, that a forest, a wood, or even a field, is a confused orchestra of music to sharply listening ears, but he had not realized that even so deserted a spot as this rocky canyon would have a vivid life of its own. His ears, made preternaturally acute by anxiety, heard a thousand noises that would have escaped his ears had he been walking or riding. Indeed, many of them, if not most of them, would have been hushed.

All the wild world hushes itself to stillness when Man walks abroad.

Man may walk through a forest and see nothing of wild life, but, for every hundred steps he takes, there are as many pairs of eyes watching him. Overhead there may be the fierce glare of a bay lynx crouched upon a branch, and by his feet there will be the moveless fear of a rabbit on its form. The bird world is awake to him, from the soaring scrutiny of a hawk to the beady-eyed watchfulness of a mother warbler. The weasel, which fears little, and the shrew, which fears everything, will alike hide or congeal into rigidity as Man passes by. And who shall measure the number of creatures of the insect world that scuttle to their holes in the ground or take shelter behind stone or leaf or twig at the earth-shaking tread of the intruder? For, in the woods, Man is ever and always an intruder.

Stillness is the animal's chief protection. Well do the woods folk know how extraordinarily difficult it is to see forms that are motionless. The old legend of the Gorgon's Head which turned all that looked upon her to stone, is true in Nature wherever Man stirs, save that the spell is broken as soon as he is gone.

To the woods folk, any place untouched by Man, and, in a lesser degree, every cultivated



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BOB-CAT IN TREE, WITH MEMBER OF ROOSEVELT PARTY PHOTOGRAPHING IT.



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FIND THE BOB-CAT!

An excellent test for eyesight. The animal is a trifle below the exact middle of the picture. A magnifying-glass will show the head and the expression clearly.

field and garden also, is not a silent place, lonely and forsaken. It is a place of tumult, a crowded metropolis, a battle-ground so full of life and competition that only by the hardest kind of work can shelter and food be provided, only by the strictest vigilance can safety be assured. No block in the heart of the busiest city of the world is so full of human life, as any acre of the woods is full of woods life.

There is more than a mere simile in this. Just as Man, living in the midst of his city, can distinguish, almost without noticing, a thousand different sounds, so can the woods folk. The rattle of a cart, the throb of a motor-car, the clank of a street-car gong, the cries of the newsboys, the slamming of doors, the ringing of bells, the clamor of conversation, all these are heard and yet unheard. But let some one unusual noise mingle with all these, the wail of a fire siren or the roar of an aëroplane, and every ear in the city will pick it out and every man stand to listen.

So, in the woods, of all the medley of sounds, the ears of the tiniest creature can detect instantly the voices and movements of friend or foe. It is for this reason that the hunters of the wild are silent creatures, possessing either incredible

skill in stalking or incredible patience in waiting for their prey. One of the most constant mysteries to Man is the movement of heavy animals in the woods. A bear, though weighing six to ten times as much as a man, if he wishes can move so silently that the sharpest human ears cannot hear a sound. More wonderful still, a bull moose, with huge spreading horns, will fade through dense woods like a ghost, although it would seem that his horns would be entangled in overhead branches with every step he takes.

If, however, a hunter, man or boy, will go into the woods at night, find a comfortable place to sit or lie, where he will not have to move so much as a finger, and wait, he will be rewarded by hearing the faint orchestra of several thousand tiny instruments commence its nightly concert. An expert naturalist will be able to pick out thirty or forty of such sounds. But, since the human ear is a very clumsy instrument, unable to hear either sounds that are very low or those that are very high, it is well to remember that the little creatures of the wild will not only hear more, but can distinguish the sounds better. There is no silence to sharp ears. Some measure of all this came to Gavan, as he sat in the night, listening.

Yet many more of the woods folk depend less on their ears than on their noses. There are as many scents in the wild as there are noises. Every plant or tree has its own characteristic perfume, every animal gives forth its own savor. Odors may attract or they may repel. The Man-smell, to the woods folk, always spells danger.

It is worthy of note that smell is a much more complicated matter than is generally supposed. While, in many cases, what is known as odor consists of incredibly small particles or molecules of matter dispersed into the air, and therefore carried—as dust might be carried—by the wind, yet, in other cases, odors seem to follow the much more complex laws of radiant heat. One may stand to windward of a fire and yet be warm. The heat is therefore radiating against the wind. In similar fashion, a hunter may creep up wind so silently and stealthily that he has not made a sound, and with such care in relation to the direction of the wind that never once has the breeze carried his scent to the object of the chase, and yet, sometimes at great distances, the keen nose of a deer, for example, will scent danger, the sentinel will alarm the herd and all chance of a successful shot is gone.

Old hunters knew this well, and the Indians of the Canadian forests, who lived largely by still-hunting, used to call it the "back smell." Iroquois hunters used to smear themselves all over with bear grease, so that, in event of the "back scent" reaching the game, the odor would be that of bear, a familiar and friendly odor to those denizens of the woods which they were hunting for game. Though the bear is a carnivorous animal, eating flesh, at times, he is omnivorous. He eats insects as well as a great amount of vegetable food, acorns and wild nuts, to change the diet of mice, ground squirrels and marmots which his great claws enable him to dig out of their burrows with great rapidity. Pioneer hunters used to adopt the same method of disguising the man-smell when setting traps. Many old-time trappers used to smear traps, hands and shoes with catnip paste or with a mink scent made up of equal parts of decayed fish oil and honey to which was added one-eighth of the quantity of essence of peppermint, or anise.

The "back scent" is one of the mysteries of nature. Fabre, one of the most careful of all naturalists, found that the odor from a butterfly, so faint that it was absolutely unnoticeable to the

human nose, yet was powerful enough to attract males from a distance of miles away, against the wind. Moreover, though he tried to veil the scent with the most powerful and evil-smelling chemicals known to science, the male moths flew straight to the place where their desired mate had rested. No experiment known to science has yet satisfactorily explained these X-rays of smell.¹

Moreover, many of the creatures of the wild have yet another sense, so strange, so little known to Man, that it has not yet been given a name. For lack of any better word it is sometimes called "feeling," and consists in the receiving and transmitting of wireless means of communication. The extraordinary migration of such widely different creatures as birds and eels are a part of this problem, as is also the "speech" of ants, the homing of bees, or the infection of fear.

To Gavan, many of these things were vaguely known. He knew the sharpness of the hearing of animals, their keenness of scent, and the unexplained ability of certain creatures to tell when their enemy, Man, was near. The latter sense,

¹ Every boy should have the books of J. H. Fabre in his library. This question of "back scent" and the great naturalist's experiments with regard to it may be found in his "Social Life in the Insect World."

that of "feel," he was about to know himself.

The night passed on, with its mountain chill, and Gavan shivered. A slight movement at his feet caught his attention. Duff had waked from sleep. His eyes blinked out of their slumbrous state, then ceased to blink and became attentive. His ears, which had been lying close to his head, commenced to rise, slowly. Presently they pointed forward with an alert bearing. The dog slightly turned his head to one side, as though to catch sound waves upon two levels. The flaccid legs contracted under him, the muscles of his back quivered. The domestic animal had become a wild animal upon whose quickness of sense life or death might depend.

And Gavan realized that his shiver had not been born of cold, but of unknown fear.

Some evil Thing was approaching.

The boy laid his hand on the dog's collar. The animal was as tense and rigid as though he were built of steel. He made no responsive move to his master's hand.

Had Duff burst into a paroxysm of barking, the boy would have been less alarmed. But not a sound came from the dog. Only the hair on his neck bristled.

Suddenly, quite suddenly, Gavan became conscious of the beating of his heart. It sounded loud and fluttering. He swallowed hard, several times.

He glanced down at Duff. There was foam on the dog's lips, yet he had not made a sound.

With a strong effort, the boy got a grip on his nerves. He took his rifle in hand.

Was it imagination, or had the sounds of the night grown still? He listened intently. Yes, the myriad voices were hushed. Something was approaching, something which spoke of menace to the woods folk.

It was something, therefore, of which the very creatures of the wild themselves were in fear.

Duff's sudden access of hate and distrust was even more alarming. Something was approaching of which a domesticated creature was in fear.

Was that a movement near the head of the canyon?

Yes!

Out of the shadow of the rocks, half upright, running with a curious, leaping gait, came a shaggy gray figure.

The Wolf-Woman!

The creature ran forward a few steps, then

stopped, sniffed, crouched on the ground and howled, a high dismal howl, half-beast, half-human.

Duff slunk back, not daring even to growl.

Many a time had Gavan scoffed at the story of the Wolf-Woman of the Cross-Three Ranch.

He was not scoffing now.

Yet the tale was a curious one. This woman, the Mexican wife of a rancher in the neighborhood, had been found, when a girl, lying on the open, a long way from a water-hole, almost dead from thirst and exhaustion. Her shoes were worn through and her clothes in rags. According to her own story, she had been driven away from a Mexican settlement, far to the south, because she had threatened to deliver to justice a man who had killed her brother.

The girl was pretty and the ranchman married her, not long after. For a year or two all went well. But, a few weeks after her first child was born, it was found dead and half-devoured, half a mile from the ranch-house. There was no suspicion, then. Two years later, a second child disappeared. The men of the place searched carefully. There was no track of animal to be found near the scene of the tragedy. A year later,

the child of a Mexican living in an adobe hut, several miles away, was spirited away while the parents were working in the fields and the mother declared that she had seen a great gray wolf, running on its hind-legs in human fashion, prowling about the place, several times before. Close watch was kept, for there were other little children in this adobe home and, one day, a huge gray wolf was seen at twilight and shot through the foreleg.

The rancher, returning home that night, found his wife with a bullet-wound through her fore-arm, which she ascribed to accidental mishandling of a six-shooter. There was no other evidence. The ranchman said nothing, but from that day on, the woman lived alone in the ranch-house. Not even her husband would speak to her, nor would any man touch the food that she had cooked.

The most intelligent men of the district scoffed at the story, but they left the woman alone. The sheriff, a highly educated man—one of the many adventurous types who have gone west for freedom of life and the lure of open spaces—declined to arrest the woman on suspicion, although admitting that less than two and a half centuries ago, werewolves were so common in France that trials

and convictions were frequent.¹ The laws of New Mexico, the sheriff declared, did not permit of witchcraft trials, nor would he admit that a mere coincidence of circumstantial evidence justified mob action. He kept a would-be lynching crowd in hand.

But Gavan, listening to that half-beast, half-human howling, felt his doubts strengthen. He knew that a belief in werewolves had existed in every country of the Old World.

Not running now, but crouching on the ground, the Beast-Figure crept forward. It had not the gait of a wolf, still less had it the movements of a thing human. Evil was surely abroad. Every sound of the wild was hushed. The dog, rigid as stone, forbore even to snarl.

The howl, half-beast, half-human, pierced the silence again, and the Thing crept on. It approached close to the grave.

Gavan's fingers closed upon his rifle. The distance was short, not more than fifty yards. He could not possibly miss. Yet—

If the Thing were human and not beast, had he the right to shoot? Would it not be murder?

¹The last was in 1703. The curious part of the werewolf convictions was that most of the accused persons confessed, probably either from insanity or fear.



Courtesy of Mr. Lewis Spence.

'WARE THE WEREWOLF!

Illustrating the world-wide superstition of creatures half-wolf, half-man.
The spirit of the wolf is represented as entering
the body of the man.

Creeping forward, the Thing laid a paw upon the stones of the grave.

Duff growled.

In the sheer silence, the low rumble in the dog's throat sounded like distant thunder. It startled Gavan, whose nerves were tense almost to snapping point, but, at the same time, it gave him courage. That growl, at least, was something normal, something comprehensible.

The Thing turned its head slowly.

Shadowed by its pose, below the uppricked ears of a wolf, still could be discerned the flat lines of a human face. The bared teeth were not those of a wolf.

No, he dared not shoot!

For some minutes—which seemed like hours—the Thing stared in the direction of the growling, but Gavan had chosen his place well, and in the deep shadow he could not be seen.

Then, over and above the low rumble in the dog's throat, there came a faint "click" and Gavan saw one of the stones on the grave move.

Sudden anger boiled up in the boy and overbore his superstitious terrors. The grave should not be desecrated!

He stepped boldly into the moonlight, his rifle

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at his shoulder. If the Thing attacked, he could shoot in self-defense.

But, as he moved, the Beast-Thing whirled away, running like a human being.

"After it, Duff!" cried Gavan.

But the dog whimpered and crouched upon the ground.

Gavan's rifle was at his shoulder, his finger on the trigger, yet the boy dared not shoot.

In a second the Thing had turned the head of the canyon and disappeared.

Gavan returned to his post.

All the night long, almost motionless, he watched, but nothing disturbed the stillness of the canyon.

At last dawn came, and following it, the sunlight. Stretching himself and with an unbounded satisfaction that the night was over, Gavan walked to the side of the grave and bent down to look at the ground beside it.

The tracks were those of a wolf, but no wolf ever walked with so heavy a tread!

CHAPTER II

THE GRIZZLY-WOMAN

COURAGE and sunlight go together. There are many people who will yield to their fears when the uncertain glimmer of starlight or moonlight sends shadows to dancing, and yet who will brave without a qualm any danger that can actually be seen.

Had Gavan seen this track during the night, he might have had a bitter fight with panic. In the light of morning, however, his first thought was for action.

"Ghosts don't leave a trail," he said to himself aloud; "that's sure!"

He turned sharply to follow up the trail, whistling to Duff as he did so.

The dog whined and refused to follow.

So Gavan, turning his back on the grave, traced the tracks to the head of the canyon. The more he studied the prints in the dust, the more puzzled he grew. They were wolf tracks, there was not a doubt of that, but no wolf in the world of which

the boy had ever heard had made tracks which were so large, nor which were so deeply set. Nor was the gait that of a wolf. It was more like that of a bear, walking, as bears do, with the greater part of the weight on the hind feet.

As old hunters know well, there is a great deal of difficulty in following a wolf slot over a stretch which has also been crossed by dogs. It takes a tracker of the first order to be able to distinguish between the track of a wolf and of some breeds of dog. The wolf track is a trifle narrower in proportion to its width, and that is all. Herein Gavan found no trouble. The trail he was following was unlike that of any wolf or dog whose slot the boy had seen. He tracked the prints out of Ghost Canyon to a stretch of stony soil above Tom Creek on which no foot could leave a mark.

As it chanced, on all sides of this stony stretch, there was enough soil loosened by ground squirrels to show a track. Yet not a sign could he see. The wolf-tracks led in, but they did not lead out.

With threats and coaxing intermingled, Gavan set Duff on the trail, but the hound was equally at fault. From any sign that was left, the Thing must have disappeared into thin air. There were hoof-marks, of course, those of his cousin's pony,

those of his own, and, undoubtedly others, but wolf-tracks there were none. The trail was lost.

Whatever It was, the Thing was gone and daylight was come. The vigil had been long and nerve-racking, but Gavan's heart was high within him, for he had dared to spend the night in Ghost Canyon and he had saved the grave from desecration. No full-grown man could have done more.

He caught his pony, took off the hobbles and loped for the XO ranch, whence word was sent to the sheriff, who also acted as coroner. As for himself, tired out with a long night's watching, Gavan threw himself down on a bunk in the ranch-house and slept like a bear in winter, until the call for dinner brought him wide awake and hungry.

At dinner he told the story in all detail to the cattle-punchers on the place and to the sheriff, a quiet, gray-eyed man, quite unlike the supposed sheriff of a "bad man" country, rather resembling a business man in an eastern city. But Sheriff Capton had once had a reputation for downing his man. It was not so much that he was phenomenally quick at his gun-play as that he seemed to have a queer intuitive sense of when the man he was after was going to draw his gun.

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"Hunch" Capton, they called him in the neighborhood, and the Mexicans, especially, gave him a wide berth. To them there was something uncanny in the sheriff's ability to read the thoughts of others.

Gavan expected that the men would saddle and ride immediately after dinner, but, after cigarettes were rolled and lighted, no one showed any desire to stir.

"What are we waiting for?" asked Gavan.

"Ol' Quick Feather," one of the older men answered. "Hunch, there, thinks the Chief is the only man that savvy's a trail."

"How about McLeod?" suggested Gavan, who had met the government expert. McLeod was one of the trappers employed by the U. S. Biological Survey in its work of controlling predatory animals, and he possessed a great reputation as a trapper. He was given somewhat to tall talk, however, and was often heard to boast that there wasn't an animal alive that he wouldn't track into its den and tackle without any other weapon than a bowie-knife.

"Hunch ain't really taken all the stock he should in Mac since the six-toed bear deal," answered the old puncher, who was known simply as "Pinto"

because one of his eyes was a little darker in color than the other.

"Just what was that story?" asked Gavan. "I heard something about it, but never got the rights of it. Blue Joe didn't talk much."

"No," agreed the cowboy, "he didn't. But the story's worth tellin'. It ain't so frequent that a chap sits in to a lone hand, the way Mac did, an' rakes in all the chips on the table in one turn of a card."

"How was it, Pinto?" asked the boy.

"This all came off quite a few years ago, when I first struck the range," the cowboy answered. "Mac had a cattle outfit, that time, an' the varmints used to be a heap more plentiful than they are now. There was one old grizzly that had turned cattle-killer."

"Won't all grizzlies kill cattle?" asked the boy.

The other shook his head.

"Mighty few o' them will," he answered. "But when a bear gets that idee in his head, he's like a sheep-killin' dog, there ain't no way to break him o' the habit. Mac, he was just plumb determined to get that bear.

"Well, one day, ridin' over the range, some o' the boys, Hunch Capton among 'em, found a steer

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with Mac's brand which had just been killed recent. It had been rainin' durin' the night an' some o' the boys corralled the idea that when it was dry enough they would put one over on Mac. He used to be shore a heap superstitious, was Mac. He's got more savvy now, since he got to working for the U. S.

"Waitin' until the ground was plenty dry an' wouldn't show their own tracks, some o' the boys went to work an' made the print of an extra toe beside the other five, wherever a print showed a bit clear, to make it look like it was a track of a six-toed bear, leadin' right to a den not far away.

"Then they took an old bear-skin an' stuffed it in a kind of a fashion, putting it 'way back in the cave. After which, they rode off to Mac to tell him they had tracked the cattle-killin' grizzly an' this was the time for him to make good his long talk about facin' a grizzly an' to do it pronto."

"So that he would go in and stab a stuffed bear?" the boy grinned. "That would sure put the joke on him!"

"So Hunch and the rest of the boys figured. Well, Mac came ridin' right over as soon as he heard the news, an' just looked down once at the queer track. Then he refused, point-blank, to

follow up the tracks 'til the next day. The boys joked him to a fare-you-well, but Mac stuck out."

"Why?" asked Gavan.

"I misremember exactly what reason he trotted out, said he couldn't hunt a six-toed bear on a Friday, or some sech foolish an' superstitious reason—he always had a bunch o' superstitions corralled that no one else had ever heard of—but he said he was sure willin' to go an' tackle the bear the next day.

"Well, as you can gamble, that story went all over the range, an' the next day there must have been twenty or more o' the boys come up to see Mac tackle the man-killin' grizzly with a bowie-knife. The boys were just ready to bust with laughin' thinkin' how Mac was going to get the cards stacked on him, but no one cracked a smile. As for Mac, he made out to be quite gratified at seein' such a big turnout for his duel with the bear.

"The round-up waitin' to see the show trailed along after Mac, who squinted at the ground once in a while as though to assure himself of the track an' by an' by he reached the den. Most o' the boys had a pain in their insides keepin' from laughin' but Mac looked serious. An' the more serious he looked, the more it hurt the rest to keep

from laughin'. Then, drawin' his knife, Mac crept into the den.

"For a minute or two every one said nothin'. They were just gettin' ready to send up a geer-oolius hoot when Mac came out after stabbin' the stuffed bear.

"Then, from inside the cave, they heard a lot of shoutin' an' a big puff of smoke, an', like a train plunGIN' out of a tunnel, come plunGIN' a great big bear!"

"But I thought the bear was stuffed!" exclaimed Gavan.

"That one wasn't stuffed. He didn't run away, either, but made straight for the bunch. They scattered. They knew that the bear they had put in there was stuffed an' there wasn't any one ready to try conclusions with a resurrected stuffed bear. As for the animile, he acted just like he was locoed, driving right straight through the middle of us an' never lookin' to the right or left.

"Then, out from the cave, comes Mac, smokin' a cigarette an' joshes us all most horrible, about twenty cowboys, each one with a gun on his leg, being scared out o' their wits by a bear. The laugh was on us sure, that time."

"But how did Mac do it?" asked Gavan.

"I never rightly knew, but I reckon he'd caught a bear in a trap o' some sort, roped an' tied him an' in some way toted him to the den, settin' him loose when he got in an' lightin' a fire behind him to make him get out o' the cave. He'd smeared a log in the cave with honey in which he mixed loco-weed¹ or some other dope which just made the bear crazy. It wasn't any grizzly, either, just a good-sized black bear, but the rest of us weren't lookin' any too closely. For all I know, it may have been a tame bear.

"But it's a sure thing that Mac had done turned the joke on us, an' Hunch, who doped out the whole deal, hasn't ever felt very happy about Mac ever since. They're good enough friends, all right, but not what you might call pally. That's the only time that I ever heard of any one gettin' the better o' Hunch."

The sheriff smiled at the recital of the story, but responded only,

"I'll bet on Quick Feather following up the

¹A weed growing on the prairies which, when cattle or horses eat it, sends them mad. Many a square mile of rich pasture in the West has to be abandoned by reason of the prevalence of loco-weed.

Wolf-Woman trail if any one can. And here he comes now," he added, as the figure of a distant rider appeared in the distance.

The other men yawned, stretched and went to the corral for their horses.

"How, Quick Feather!" said the sheriff.

"How!" the Indian answered.

"Gray Johnny tell you about the tracks of the Wolf-Woman?"

The Indian nodded.

"He tell me," he answered.

"Well, we'll start right off."

"Good," was Quick Feather's laconic reply.

There were seven in the party that rode back to Ghost Canyon, "Hunch" Capton, the sheriff; Quick Feather, "Pinto Joe," "Thin-lip" Jack, the ranch boss, two other riders of the ranch and Gavan. In a way, the boy felt himself to be under watch, for the sheriff would have been justified in arresting the lad as the only person present when Blue Joe Keary had met death by violence, but no one suspected Gavan.

The grave in the canyon was still undisturbed, as it had been in the morning. The Sheriff and Quick Feather went forward together to scan the ground carefully for tracks. This done, the stones

were removed and the sheriff examined the body carefully.

A very brief examination sufficed. It was clear that the wounds which had killed the man had been received from the mountain lion's claws, and that the burst gun had been a principal cause.

"All straight goin'," said the sheriff, straightening up from his stooping position. "Death by accident; we'll take him to town an' bury him right. The padre will fix it up."

Taos, a Mexican town close to the famous Indian pueblo, is an old settlement, and, though small, is well provided with the resources of the old Spanish civilization.

This point decided, and Gavan thus officially released from any possibility of accusation, the interest of the party centered on the apparition or the Thing which Gavan had seen the previous night. The boy repeated the story for the third time, pointing out where he sat in the shadow watching during the night, from which direction he had seen the Thing advance, and describing, with all the exactitude of detail that he could summon up, the appearance and motions of the object of suspicion.

When he had finished there was a dead silence,

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which one of the younger cowboys was the first to break.

"Guess you must ha' been sleepin'," he said, "an' when a lobo came aroun' you thought it was somethin' else in the moonlight. The tracks is sure those of a wolf."

The sheriff looked thoughtfully at the young puncher.

"Might be," he agreed noncommittally.

But the ranch boss thought otherwise.

"I notice," said Thin-lip Jack, caustically, "that a youngster always wants to explain everything he sees. A young coyote thinks he has a lot o' savvy an' gets plumb confident. He'll put his foot in a trap as often as not. But you note a coyote that's reached years o' discretion, say, three years an' better, an' even if there ain't no reason to be suspicious he'll hang around a bait for three days before he goes near it. He's old enough to know that he hasn't got as much savvy as he once thought he had."

"Well, what do you think about the deal yourself?" retorted the other.

"I'm goin' to set in an' look on a while," the ranch boss answered; "so far, I don't know the game well enough to buy chips."

The sheriff turned to the Indian.

"What do you say, Quick Feather?" he asked.

The Indian stooped down and examined the tracks carefully, followed two or three of them, and then came back to the group.

"Not wolf!" he answered simply.

"Sure o' that?"

"Not wolf!" the Indian repeated.

"What is it then, Quick Feather?" Pinto asked.

"Not wolf," was the reply, given a third time.

"You don't believe that Wolf-Woman story, do you?" the young cattle-puncher asked, mockingly.

The Indian looked at him gravely and made no reply.

"You've heard the story, haven't you, Quick Feather?" the sheriff asked, though he was certain the Indian would know, for it was universally known in that section.

"I have heard," answered Quick Feather.

"Do you think it could be true?"

"Huh! Does any man know all the trails of the world?"

"No," the sheriff agreed, "but a new trail does not come in a day, Quick Feather. How could a woman be a wolf or a wolf a woman?"

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"Does any man know all the trails of the world?" repeated the Indian, with that repetition of phrase which so many of his white friends found so exasperating.

The sheriff changed his question.

"Have you ever heard of such a thing before?" he asked.

"I have heard."

"One of the old tales of the pueblo?"

"A medicine tale."

"Is it only for the estufa?"¹ asked the sheriff, who had lived a long time in the country and knew the ways of the Pueblo Indians, "or is it one which may be told?"

"It may be told."

The sheriff took out his bag of tobacco and rolled himself a cigarette. The others followed his example, and waited. One cigarette had been smoked out and others lighted before Quick Feather began to speak. He spoke slowly, in good English, but with the strained phrases of the Indian who has only learned the white language in his old age.

"Many winters ago," he began, "before the

¹ The estufa (in some groups known as the kiva) is a circular chamber in the pueblo kept sacred for tribal ceremonial.

White Rabbit (the sun) had grown as big as he is now and burned up the land with his magic, the animals were more like men. They had councils and were able to talk. There are some who think that they have not quite forgotten.”

The youngest cow-puncher gave a foolish little laugh.

Quick Feather slowly turned his eyes on him.

“The jack-rabbit once laughed at the coyote because he could not run fast a long time without getting tired. So the coyote spoke to another coyote, and one chased the rabbit while the other rested, and when the second one was tired, the first took up the chase. The coyotes ate well that night and the end of that rabbit was as that of those who are too young to have beliefs.”

The cowboy looked uncomfortable, and thereafter forbore to interrupt.

“It was in the times when animals were able to talk,” the Indian continued, impassively, “that there dwelt in a wickiup¹ a family wherein there were nine children, seven boys and two girls. One girl, she that was called Bearskin-Woman, was tall and wore red berries in her hair and there were

¹ Naturally, a pueblo Indian would ascribe this tale to one of the roving tribes.

those who said that she made medicine-sticks in secret.

“In the year-time when the cactus is in blossom, the six older brothers of Bearskin-Woman went away on the war-path with the Badger people, and, while they were away, the One with Claws on his Hands, the Grizzly Bear, came walking to the wickiup.

“There was rich store of venison in the cave of the Grizzly Bear, for no hunter’s arrow was so sure in the chase as the stroke of one of those clawed hands.

“There was a store of skins in the cave of Grizzly Bear, though there was none to tan them soft and white as can be done by the hands of a woman.

“There was protection in the cave of Grizzly Bear, because of the strength of the One with Claws on his Hands. He felt that, when wedded to the wit of a woman who made medicine-sticks in secret his power would be greater than the tribesmen could overcome.

“So, though the father refused his blessing and the mother painted her face white for evil token on the wedding day, Bearskin-Woman married Grizzly Bear while her brothers were away.



Courtesy of "Field and Stream."

COLONEL ROOSEVELT KILLING A GRIZZLY.

An incident in the hunting life of the greatest American of the Twentieth Century.

“When two moons had become thin and died of hunger, the brothers returned. Their father laid upon them the command to kill Grizzly Bear and bring their sister back, for it was not pleasing to the gods that a Bear and a woman should marry. So the brothers watched for Grizzly Bear and when he was more than an arrow-shot away from the cave they pierced him with many arrows. Yet, in spite of all their arrows, Grizzly Bear crawled back to his cave. There, before he died, Bearskin-Woman stooped down and placing her mouth near that of the dying Grizzly Bear, she breathed in his spirit as it left the body.

“Thus Bearskin-Woman became Grizzly-Woman in spirit. Then, before the warmth had left the body and the great muscles had ceased to quiver, Grizzly-Woman took a piece of skin of her dead mate and made an amulet. In it she kept her medicine-sticks. Thus, with the spirit of the grizzly and the secret of the body of the Grizzly, she could change into a Grizzly or a Woman whenever she willed the change. Nor could her brothers kill her, for by making medicine she knew whenever they were near and they feared the gods who had given such great strength to Grizzly-Woman.

“Then, one day, making medicine, Grizzly-Woman learned that her father and mother had made plans to kill her. Since they had given her life, they had the right to take it away again, which the brothers might not do. Grizzly-Woman knew her danger, so, one night, she dashed into the wickiup and killed her father and her mother in revenge for their plotting against her. Then she changed back again into the form of a woman, and, seizing her youngest brother, Okinai, and his sister Sinopah, went back to her cave, taking the children with her, determining that they should live with her. She thought, by her medicine, to make them Grizzly-Boy and Grizzly-Girl, but she was afraid to give them too strong medicine at first, for the children were too young to take a full dose, and, being afraid of their Grizzly-Woman sister, every time that they could, they did their best to get rid of the bad medicine.

“The six brothers were in great trouble when they found that the children were gone and they did everything they could think of to bring them back. They asked Turkey Buzzard, who sees everything, and he told them to go and see the ever-hungry, Clever Coyote.

“So the brothers went to Clever Coyote and he told them what to do. The six brothers returned and waiting secretly until Okinai went to the river for water, they told the boy to gather the leaves of the prickly-pear cactus and to spread them on the ground outside the cave, but to leave a narrow twisting path through the spiny leaves which only he would know, but which could not be seen. Then, in the dark of the night, his sister Sinopah holding tightly to his waist-cloth, and treading in his footsteps, he should escape from the cave by the little path among the spiny cactus leaves.

“By her medicine, Grizzly-Woman would know at once that they were gone, even though she were asleep, and she would undoubtedly rush out after them and try to seize them. But, Clever Coyote said, she would step on the prickly pear and the cactus-spines would go into her feet so that she would not be able to run fast.

“Even as Clever Coyote had suggested, so it came about. But Okinai decided that before he left the cave, he would seize the Grizzly-Woman’s medicine-bag. When it was just the middle of the night, Okinai snatched up the bag and left the cave, Sinopah holding fast to his waist-cloth, and

the two passed swiftly down the little twisty path between the prickly-pear leaves scattered on the ground.

“Grizzly-Woman woke at once, and knew by her medicine that the children had escaped. She knew, too, that her medicine-bag was gone. It was important, therefore, to catch the children at once, and not wait until morning. So she rushed out over the prickly-pear leaves, and the spines entered her feet and hurt horribly. But she rushed on, just the same though not as fast. The children reached their brothers and all eight ran rapidly, but, in spite of the pains in her feet, Grizzly-Woman was overtaking them.

“Then, suddenly, in the path Clever Coyote appeared, hungry as ever.

“‘Shoot the arrow in the medicine-bag!’ he said to Okinai.

“‘Where shall I shoot?’ asked the boy.

“‘Shoot ahead of you,’ answered Clever Coyote.

“So Okinai took a bow from one of his brothers, picked out the medicine arrow from the bag and shot it ahead of him. And, whisk! the moment the arrow fell, Okinai, Sinopah, and the six brothers were at the same place as the arrow.

“Again Grizzly-Woman commenced to over-

take the children and again Okinai shot the arrow.

“A third time he did this, and then Clever Coyote who had been running easily beside the children in spite of the flight of the magic arrow, said,

“‘Do not shoot again. If you shoot more than three times, you will go backward as far as the arrow goes forward.’

“‘What shall I do now?’ asked Okinai.

“‘You will find a feather in the medicine-bag,’ said Clever Coyote, ‘take it out and wave it behind you.’

“So Okinai took out the magic feather and waved it behind him, and a dense thicket of chaparral sprang up between the two children and the six brothers. But Grizzly-Woman plunged through, her great weight forcing down the bushes as though they were grass, and again she gained on the children.

“‘Grizzly-Woman is very near!’ said Okinai, when he saw that the chaparral was passed.

“‘There is a medicine-stick in the bag,’ said Clever Coyote, ‘put your tongue to it and then spit behind you.’

“So Okinai put his tongue to the medicine-stick and spat, and there was a great lake with Grizzly-Woman on the farther shore.

“But Grizzly-Woman changed her fur to a white color and plunged into the water, swimming very fast, so that very soon she had crossed.

“ ‘Grizzly-Woman is very near,’ said Okinai.

“ ‘There is a nut in the medicine-bag,’ said Clever Coyote. ‘Quickly make a small hole in the ground with the medicine-stick and put the nut in it. While the tree grows, cut off a piece of your hair, of Sinopah’s hair, and of each of your brother’s.’

“So Okinai took the medicine-stick and made a small hole in the ground. He put the nut in it and at once there was a great tree with heavy branches. It grew fast, but not so fast that it was heavy enough for the oldest brothers. While the tree was still small, Sinopah, the lightest, began to climb, then Okinai climbed, then the two youngest of the brothers, but before the tree was big enough for the four oldest brothers, Grizzly-Woman had reached the tree and she reached up and pulled down the four older brothers with her claws.

“Said Clever Coyote,

“ ‘Rub the hair that you took from Sinopah’s head with the medicine-stick, and it will turn into an arrow.’

“So Okinai did as Clever Coyote had said.

“ ‘Now,’ said Clever Coyote, ‘shoot that arrow at the sky.’

“So Okinai lifted up the bow and put to the string the arrow that had been made of the little girl’s hair and shot. And, as the hair went flying into the sky, Sinopah flew into the sky after it.

“He did the same with the hair of each of his brothers. The youngest, being heavier, did not go so high as Sinopah, the next oldest, heavier still, was lower still, and the four big brothers who had been clawed by Grizzly-Woman only went a little way.

“ ‘Now,’ said Clever Coyote, ‘wrap your own hair around the medicine-stick and shoot that into the sky.’

“So Okinai shot, and, as the medicine-stick sped high into the sky he followed it, up, up and up, until he stopped in the exact middle of the sky. And, because he held the medicine-stick, he became the center of the stars, and all the stars danced round him. But Grizzly-Woman could not fly after them, for she did not have her medicine-bag. Still because Sinopah and Okinai had taken some of the Bear medicine the eight children took the form of a Bear in the sky. The two oldest of the brothers (the outer stars of The Dipper or Great

Bear) point to where Okinai lives, in the middle of the sky, with the medicine-stick, and the rest of the family swings around him. The medicine-stick, like an arrow with a big head (the Little Bear), Okinai still holds in his hand.

"So," concluded the Indian, "if you ask whether there have been those who were men and animals besides, I will say that there are tales of such."

"Tales, yes," said one of the men contemptuously, "but how about the real thing?"

"Down in Texas, where I came from," stated the ranch boss, "there's an Indian tribe, the Tonkawa, who, one time, used to be cannibals, so the wise ones say. They had a sort o' secret an' fraternal society o' wolf-men, who togged themselves out in wolf-skins an' took wolf's vittles for their regular chuck. When one o' the wolf-men died, the rest o' the bunch used to pick out some man in the tribe—I don't know how they chose him—bury him in the ground for a whole day, leavin' only a hole through a straw for him to breathe. Then the wolf-men dug him up, put a wolf-skin on him, an' pursuin' that time, as you might say, he doesn't have to work none for the tribe. Now, the way it looks to me, an Indian doesn't do a

thing for nothin'. He wouldn't go to imitate a wolf-man if there hadn't ever been any. That looks to me as if there might be somethin' to it."

"Well," retorted Hunch Capton, "I don't pretend to know what all those stories are worth. Bein' sheriff, I'm a whole lot quicker on a fact than a yarn. As for these here tracks, if Quick Feather says they aren't those of a wolf, so far as I'm in the deal, that goes. However, that's no special business o' mine. Blue Joe Keary was killed by a mountain lion, an' the bu'stin' o' his gun is responsible. That goes as she lays. Any one who wants to, can follow up the Wolf-Woman story. I've somethin' else to think of.

"There's one thing, though," the sheriff continued, "an' that's about the kid. Before I go back, I'd like to savvy what's goin' to come to him."

"He's got a job on the XO Ranch, any time he likes to come around," the ranch boss replied, promptly; "he can help around with the chuck, now, an' maybe ride fence next year, when he gets a trifle bigger."

Gavan flashed a look of gratitude at the ranch boss.

"That would be fine, Jack," he said, "but—".

“Well?”

“I’d rather wait until I can ride the range.”

“Knockin’ about with the cook wouldn’t suit you, eh?” queried the other.

“It isn’t only that,” answered the boy, anxious to dispel the impression that he was afraid to work, “but Blue Joe had a bunch of cattle. It’s not such a big bunch, but I’d like to keep it going, if I could.”

“Maybe,” answered the ranch boss, “but the cattle business isn’t any lie-down-and-let-me-dream game nowadays, especially with a few head. I’m willin’ to bet that Blue Joe made more out of his gun an’ his traps than he ever did out of his cattle.”

“I believe he did,” the boy agreed, “but I used to help him with those, too.”

“You mean that you want to play the hand alone?”

“If I can, Jack, sure!” declared Gavan earnestly, looking frankly into the stern face of the ranch boss.

“Live alone, cook your own chuck, an’ swing the deal without even a partner?”

“Why not?”

"An' no white man within ten miles o' the place?"

"I've never had any trouble with the Mexicans," the lad answered, "and I wouldn't really be alone. Quick Feather lives at the pueblo, of course, but he's got land only a mile and a half away and comes over often. I wouldn't be lonely, Jack, really."

The ranch boss looked at the sheriff.

"What do you think o' that, Hunch?" he queried.

Hunch Capton looked thoughtfully first at the boy, then at the ranch boss, and finally at the old Indian.

"I'd like to speak to you a minute," he said to Thin-lip Jack.

The two men walked aside a few steps.

"You know, Jack," began the sheriff, "in a way, the boy's right. If he stays on the ranch, he's got somethin'; if he doesn't, he has nothin'. He might have trouble provin' his title to the land if he tried to sell it, or if any of us tried to sell it for him, because Blue Joe didn't leave a will, and a cousin isn't likely to be the next o' kin."

The ranch boss nodded his understanding.

"Same way with the stock," the sheriff continued. "Who really owns that stock? It's a puzzle. While if the lad stays on the ranch an' keeps it goin', no one's likely to challenge his right. No stranger could jump it. No one could buy it an' get a clear title with the boy in occupation. An' if he stays on it an' works it for ten years, he'll have squatters' right of his own, regardless o' Blue Joe's leavin's."

"That's a pat hand," the ranch boss agreed.

"Then there's the line o' traps, too. You know the rule. As long as he keeps the line up, it's his line. If he lets it go, some one else can jump in."

"Clear enough," agreed the other, "an' I can see where you're headin'. But the kid's so tarnation young to be buckin' the world. He ain't much more'n a yearlin', when you come to look at it. I ain't what you'd call tender-hearted, Hunch, but I hate to saddle an' bridle a colt that ain't come to his full strength yet."

"You're dead right, Jack," the sheriff agreed, "he's just a youngster, that's sure. But that's a fault he'll grow out of in a hurry. Besides, he's a western-raised boy, leastways, he's been western-raised with Blue Joe for a good many years

now. I miss my guess if he hasn't done just about as much for Blue Joe as Blue Joe ever did for him. Keary wasn't a lily-handed nurse, I reckon."

But the ranch boss, though popular opinion would have named him as the one man in the community least likely to concern himself in a sentimental matter, was far from satisfied.

"You may be callin' the turn, Hunch," he said, "but it doesn't hit me right, yet. A steer can't hook till his horns are grown, an' there's always varmints after a herd. A youngster only fourteen years old ain't fit to be the boss of his own doin's. Suppose one o' those tricky half-breed lawyers should get hold o' the business? He'd skin the kid out o' land, stock, an' everything else so quick he'd never know what happened."

The sheriff looked appreciatively at the ranch boss.

"By the ears of a rattler, old sport," he exclaimed, "you're on the dot, there. I'd never thought of that. And the lad's a minor, too."

He pondered for a minute or two.

"See here, Jack," he said at last, "suppose you, I, an' Quick Feather should go to old Judge Adams an' locate ourselves as guardians or trustees or somethin' for the kid until he comes

of age or until we reckon he's old enough to be able to take care of himself? Then we can stake him to whatever he needs, handle the sellin' of his cattle for him, send some o' the boys to help him with his round-up, give him a job whenever there's a chance around, an' then, when he's old enough, he'll have a little stake of his own, in case he wants to break into some other line o' work later."

"Now you're talkin'," said the ranch boss; "I'll sit in on that hand. But why do you pick Quick Feather? Oughtn't we to have another white man?"

"Quick Feather's as white a man as they come," the sheriff retorted, "even if he is an Indian. But I'll tell you why I thought of him. You won't make any bones about my sayin' that you're not the timber out o' which fathers are made?"

The ranch boss gave a short laugh. He was known to be one of the most violent-tempered men in the region, though generous and kindly at bottom.

"Well," he agreed, "maybe I'm not. I don't know as I've ever aimed to be."

"Nor am I," answered the sheriff. "Besides which, I'm too busy, an' for another thing, I'm not what you might call a good risk. Of course,



Courtesy of "Forest and Stream."

"IS IT STRAIGHT?"

Not only his fool, but also his life depended on the Indian's skill in the manufacture of his weapons. A crooked arrow might be his death warrant.

bein' sheriff nowadays is a whole lot easier than it was in the old days. It's only in the movies that a western sheriff has to go shootin' desperadoes every mornin' before breakfast. I'll bet there's more shootin' in New York City in a month, than there is in the whole of the Southwestern States in ten years. But at that, there's a few folks that have the sights on their six-shooters filed close, layin' for me. I mean cattle rustlers an' the like. Some one may get me some time. That's the chance a man takes in my job."

"Unless you see 'em first," Thin-lip Jack returned.

"Which I generally aim to do," the sheriff admitted quietly. "But good luck won't pan out forever. So, Jack, if I'm carried out feet first with my boots on, some day, the other two trustees will have to choose a third. We can't tell, now, either of us, who that might be.

"Now Quick Feather, though he's an Indian—or because he's an Indian, if you like—is real fatherly, or maybe grandfatherly. You know, jest as well as I do, that when it comes to family feelin' an' family trainin', the Indian has it all over the white man, every time. An', what's more, so far as I can make out, Quick Feather's been the boy's

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best friend this long while. To back up all that, he's the kid's nearest neighbor, except for a bunch of Mexicans."

"Quick Feather may be ace-high for all I know, Hunch," the ranch boss declared, "I don't savvy Indians much. If he looks good to you, I'm not going to queer the deal. Let's put it up to him."

The two self-elected trustees then joined Quick Feather, and the sheriff explained the plan in detail. When they had finished the Indian nodded.

"I watch him like a boy of my pueblo," he declared.

"That's enough," said the sheriff, confidently. He turned to the ranch boss.

"It's like pullin' teeth to make an Indian say anything," he said, "but, in a case like this, when he does promise, it's as good as done. You can go back to the XO, feelin' easy, old sport; the boy'll be in good hands."

The three men turned to where Gavan was standing.

"See here, lad," the sheriff said, "we've been talkin' over your future," and he outlined in detail the plan of the three trustees. "In undertakin' to play the hand alone, you're layin' out for your-

self a long road, full o' hard work, a trail that you'll have to blaze an' travel for yourself. But we're with you, remember that. And, while it's a long, hard trail, it's the straight trail to independence, an' that's a Western boy's line of travel, every time!"

CHAPTER III

DOWNING A SELFISH GREASER

GAVAN's life, after the death of his cousin, proved to be by no means as lonely as the sheriff had feared. Blue Joe Keary had never been talkative, and, aside from the fact that he was alone, the boy found little difference in conditions at the cabin after he took on himself the sole management of the affairs of the little ranch.

The boy's first big surprise came a week or two later when the ranch boss rode over with two Airedales in leash. He pulled up at the cabin, threw the reins over his horse's head and dismounted stiffly. Then, slouching over with the bow-legged walk characteristic of those who have spent most of their life in stiff leather chaparejos, he thrust the ends of the leashes into the lad's hand.

"Here," he said roughly, "I've brought a couple of pards along for you. Train 'em right an' they'll tackle anything that moves in the woods."

"You mean they're for me!" exclaimed Gavan,

scarcely daring to believe that the dogs could really be for him. He had pined for Airedales ever since he was old enough to know their value.

"They're your'n, hide, hair, an' hoof," the ranch boss returned. "An' you'll soon find out that you've got two friends there that'll never go back on you."

"I've got others that I know won't go back on me," returned the boy, looking gratefully at the ranch boss.

"Well, what do you think?" growled the old westerner. "You ain't got much savvy if you expect folks to turn you down, all the while. Now, give me the straight of it about your cattle. How many head have you got?"

"All told, I've got forty-eight head," the boy answered. "I ought to have more, but I've lost a lot of calves."

"Wolves?" queried the ranch boss, frowning. "We've been losin' heavily, too."

"Coyotes and bear," Gavan answered; "at least I ran across the carcass of a yearling that had been all chewed up by a bear."

"An' how's the range?" came the next query.

"None too good," the boy responded. "It was all right last year, but it's been so dry this spring

that the feed is scant. The cattle are bone-thin."

"There's a-plenty of feed in the meadow parks 'way up near timber line," remarked the ranch boss.

"Like enough," agreed the boy, "but I don't own any land up there. You don't suppose I could afford to lease any, do you?"

"No need," answered the ranch boss. "My place is over a hundred thousand acres an' I'm not runnin' more than three thousand head on it this year. Your little bunch wouldn't be noticed. Are your beasts all branded?"

"Sure!" declared the boy. "Blue Joe and I did that last spring."

"All right," said the ranch boss, turning away and going towards his pony. "Any time you feel like it, drive your bunch up Pot Creek. There's a plenty bear up there, but I reckon you won't lose any more beasts on the mountains than you will down here in the foot-hills among the coyotes."

"But I can't do that without paying you," protested the boy; "it wouldn't be square!"

"Square nothin'," the ranch boss answered, swinging heavily into the saddle. "You keep your line o' coyote traps goin' an' that'll help the

ranch enough to more'n pay for the grass that little bunch o' yours'll eat.

"Oh, and by the way," he continued, "this place o' yours, lyin', like it does, along close by the Little Rio Grande, could be made to raise alfalfa, eh?"

"It sure could," the boy agreed, "if the land were worked up and I could get water up here."

The ranch boss swung one leg over the horn of his saddle and turned to face the boy.

"An' why in tarnation can't ye have water?" he said. "There's a toad's plenty o' water in the river."

"Mexicans," answered the boy, simply. "Blue Joe was talkin' about that one day. He started to dig an irrigation ditch, up-stream, an' the Greasers promptly told him they had all the water rights along the river."

The eyes of the ranch boss narrowed.

"They did, eh?" he said, grimly. "Well, you go ahead with that ditch, an' if any Greaser says anything, tell 'em they've got the XO Ranch to deal with first an' the sheriff afterwards."

"But if they have the right?" queried Gavan protestingly. "I don't want to butt in on another chap's rights."

"They've got water rights, sure enough," the ranch boss agreed, "an' they've got 'em before you. No one's a-goin' to deny that. But water rights are for usin', not for wastin'. There's water enough in the Little Rio Grande to irrigate ten times the land that's irrigated now, if it was properly used. There ain't no court that's goin' to allow that a Greaser has the right to waste water an' prevent a white man from usin' it. Leastways, there ain't no New Mexico court that's a-goin' to do it. Special," he added, "when the XO an' the sheriff's back of you."

The boy looked dubious.

"I'd hate to get the Mexicans down on me," he said. "I'm pretty good friends with them now, and they could make it mighty unpleasant."

The ranch boss ran his hand over his stubbly chin.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "Don't cross 'em none. But go ahead with the ditch just the same, an' if they make a fuss, say that I'm payin' you to do it. I'll guarantee to buy all the alfalfa hay you can raise at the market price."

"But the plowing?" asked the boy. "I haven't a team or farm machinery or anything."

"Hire it done," said the ranch boss. "Get the

Indians to do it for you. Quick Feather will make the contract. Don't you do it, or you'll get in wrong. It takes an Indian to handle an Indian. Then, when the work's done, send the bill to me."

"But—," the boy began, but the ranch boss cut him off.

"I ain't aimin' to give you charity," he said, surmising what was coming. "I'll charge that bill against your hay in the fall. An' that's all there is to it."

He swung his leg back into the stirrup and touched the spurs to his sturdy cow-pony.

"Bring up them dogs right," he concluded, as he jogged off, "an' you'll have friends enough 'round the place."

Gavan began to voice his thanks, but the rider loped off out of hearing.

When the ranch boss had gone, the boy began to think over what had happened. He saw at once that the backing of the all-powerful XO ranch meant everything to him. His small bunch of cattle would get the best of the range, at practically no expense to him, and, for that matter, at no expense to the ranch. His own little place would be worth a great deal more, if put into cultivation, and, as long as the XO intended to winter

a large bunch of cattle, there would always be a local market for his hay. Better still, if he could run the irrigating ditch from the river, a large part of his holding, which had been absolutely worthless before, might become of value. There remained only the question of the opposition of the Mexicans, and he knew that they were extremely jealous of their water rights.

Realizing that the ditch was the most important thing to begin with, Gavan rounded up his cattle on his little cow-pony, taking the advantage to give the Airedale pups some idea of what they might run and might not. Duff, the nondescript hound, while duly respectful of the better-bred dogs, none the less was able to hold his own because of his familiarity with western conditions. Together, the three dogs made an admirable pack. The cattle were driven up the rough trail up Pot Creek with very little trouble, and Gavan returned the next day, having seen his little herd cropping the abundant grass on the upper slopes of the mountains, from which the snow had not all melted, but lay in patches here and there.

Bright and early the next morning Gavan started off with a long-handled shovel to dig his irrigation ditch. In that soil, which is so sticky

that houses are built simply of walls of clay, an irrigation ditch is the simplest thing in the world to make, provided the levels are run right. This work was already done for Gavan, for he had found the levels on which Blue Joe Keary had commenced to work before he had been stopped by the Mexicans, two years before.

Realizing that he would have no difficulty in running the ditch across his own land, and that the fight, if there was to be one, would probably come from the running of the ditch over a piece of unused land, but which undoubtedly belonged to some Mexican settler or other, Gavan began a few feet away from the river. It would take him, he knew, almost a month's work merely to dig the narrow ditch eighteen inches wide and the same deep over the couple of miles, provided that he was let alone. There was, therefore, no time to waste.

Towards the middle of the afternoon a Mexican came riding by on his pony. He stopped and watched the boy for a few minutes. Gavan bid him "Good-day" in Spanish, which the Mexican courteously returned. The conversation did not proceed further. Towards evening, another Mexican cantered up, looked at the work the boy was

doing and rode off again without saying a word.

It was clear that trouble was brewing.

Bright and early the next morning, Gavan was again at work. He had done a couple of hundred yards the day before, and he had figured that if he could keep up the pace, the little ditch which would bring the life-giving water to his ranch could be done in three weeks.

He had hardly been at work an hour when three Mexicans rode up together. The foremost stopped and said, in English, to Gavan,

"This land belongs to Antonio Moreno."

He motioned to the Mexican who had reined up beside him.

Gavan, leaning on his spade, nodded in a friendly manner to the proprietor of the land.

"So?" he said, questioningly. "It isn't fenced."

The first speaker continued, courteously, but with a definite menace in his voice.

"The father and grandfather of Antonio have been on this land for forty years and more."

"Yes?" again queried Gavan, determined not to say anything which might provoke controversy.

"Perhaps you do not know," the Mexican continued, "that by herd law any settler who has

lived continuously for more than ten years on a certain place and has run cattle over it for ten years in succession and has built a home on it, has a clear title."

"Sure," agreed Gavan promptly, for this was exactly the basis on which he was holding the land that had been squatted by his cousin, "I know that. I didn't know that any one claimed Señor Moreno's land."

The Mexican pointed to the ditch.

"Did Antonio Moreno give you permission to run a ditch across his land?" he asked.

"If Señor Moreno holds his land under the herd law," the boy replied, seeing that his opportunity had come, "there is no need to ask his permission to run an irrigating ditch. It does not injure his land. On the contrary, it improves it."

At this, the rearmost of the three Mexicans, a dark-faced, heavy-browed man, spoke, in Spanish.

"It takes water out of the river," he said, "and injures the water rights of every settler in the valley."

Gavan spoke to the first speaker, recognizing him as the spokesman for the crowd.

"Is this gentleman a part owner of Señor Moreno's land?" he asked.

"No," the Mexican answered, "he has a large farm just a little distance down the river, near the village. All the farms in the valley have water rights, and if water is taken out of the river higher up, it injures the flow. I am sorry, but we cannot allow you to continue digging the ditch."

Gavan looked straight at the man, then played his trump card.

"I'm digging this for the XO Ranch," he said. "I'm afraid you'll have to explain it to them. I can't do anything else but go ahead as I'm told."

The three Mexicans looked at each other.

"In what way is the XO Ranch interested?" queried the foremost.

"I'll have to refer you to Jack Willis," the boy returned.

"Thin-lip Jack?"

"Yes."

Evidently the name was one to conjure with, for a gloomy silence fell on the three men. It was the leading Mexican who spoke first.

"We will take up the matter with Jack Willis," he said, "and, in the meantime, you will stop work."

"You can take up the matter with Jack Willis,"

retorted Gavan, "and, in the meantime, I shall continue work."

Whereupon, to give force and point to his remark, the boy drove his spade into the ground and turned over another foot of soil.

The Mexican scowled.

"Blue Joe Keary began," said the leader, "and he is dead."

"But Thin-lip Jack is very much alive," the lad retorted.

"You will quit work!" threatened the Mexican.

"When I get orders from the XO, not before," replied Gavan sturdily, and, acting as though the Mexicans were no longer there, he continued digging, disregarding them as though they were but fence-posts, or features of the landscape.

This contempt, of all things the most galling to a Mexican's half-Spanish, half-Indian pride, irked the men sorely, but there was nothing that they could do. They would cheerfully have shot or knifed the boy, but the wild days have passed in New Mexico, and, besides, even in the bad old days, they would have hesitated before deliberately bringing down the wrath of the white community on their heads. The opposition of the

XO punchers was not a matter to be trifled with, either. Accordingly, after a time, the three Mexicans rode off, with muttered Spanish oaths.

Next morning, Gavan, coming to his work, found his ditch filled up and level with the ground. His three days' toil had gone for nothing.

The Mexicans' revenge had begun.

Gavan sat down on a little knoll and studied the situation. Certainly, as long as this ditch was running over the Mexican's land, there would always be the probability that it would be filled up, and an hour's work in the evening could destroy all that he had done the day before.

From the Mexicans' point of view, the plan was a good one. It did not imbroid them with the XO, for they could assume absolute ignorance of the plot. It did not directly bring them into conflict with the boy, and there was no evidence that could be brought before the courts.

Gavan pondered long before he hit on a plan. Then, chuckling to himself, he went back to his little cabin and got out a large square of canvas which he used when setting his traps. Fastening strings to the sides and corners of this and cutting a couple of short forked poles, he went back in the afternoon to his work, and commenced



Courtesy of Alexander Lambert, M D.

SAFE FROM THE DOGS BUT NOT FROM A GUN.

clearing away the débris that the Mexicans had tumbled back into the portion of the ditch which he had already dug.

When evening came, Gavan unpacked the bundle, stuck the two poles in the ground, making from the canvas a small tent, untied a small sack of provisions and sat down to supper, the three dogs at his heels. The simple meal over, he stretched out his tent and, rolling himself in a blanket, lay down either to watch or to sleep, as the case might be.

He had hardly been asleep an hour when he awoke suddenly, hearing voices, and, peering out, he saw half a dozen Mexicans, gathered in a group, pointing to the tent and gesticulating violently. Presently one of the men came forward and shouted.

Gavan crept out of the tent, the dogs at his heels.

"This is my land," said the speaker, who proved to be Antonio Moreno, the owner, "I don't allow trespassing."

"I'm here looking after my ditch," the boy began, but the other cut him short.

"Ditch has nothing to do with camping," he said, brusquely. "If I don't want suspicious

characters on my land, I don't have to have them. Get out of here!"

Gavan bit his lip. He had been so interested in his ditch that he had forgotten other rights of the owner. There was no doubt that he was trespassing. He racked his brain for a suitable retort or an excuse, but found none. Sulkily, he kicked down the poles that held his tent, rolled up canvas, blanket and sack of provisions, and set off across the sage-brush without a word.

The Mexicans, all silent, watched him go. They made no taunt. A Mexican will often be mean, but rarely discourteous.

Next morning found Gavan in a brown study. He did not want to go to the ranch boss with his troubles, for he saw clearly enough that, so far, he had no evidence against the Mexicans. There was a strong presumption that it was Antonio Moreno and his friends who had filled up his ditch, but presumption was not proof. And, so far as his camping there was concerned, he had undoubtedly been in the wrong.

He racked his brains this way and that to try and find some way of getting proof that the Mexicans were each night undoing the work that he

was doing in the day, but how to get that proof without trespassing at the same time was a serious problem. Then his eye happened to fall on a mail order catalogue, which was lying on a shelf in the corner, one of those books which makes its way into nearly every farm and ranch-house in the country, and a brilliant idea struck him.

“By the hind hoofs of a mule!” he exclaimed, using one of Blue Joe’s pet expressions, “I’ve got it!”

He snatched his hat from the table and struck out of the door across the meager pasture to where his pony was trying to crop a meal from the scanty grass.

He rode straight into town and stopped at the sheriff’s house. Hunch Capton was in and greeted him warmly, insisting on the lad’s staying to dinner. Not until the meal was over did Gavan have a chance to broach the subject which had brought him to town.

“Mr. Capton,” he asked, “have you got a camera?”

“No,” answered the sheriff, “I haven’t. I can most generally remember the faces of the men

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I'm looking for, or them that's lookin' for me."

The boy's expression changed to disappointment.

"Why?" asked the sheriff kindly. "Is it some-thin' you want real bad?"

"I just wanted it for one night," declared Gavan. "And it is important, ever so important. It means a lot to me!"

"Suppose you tell me all about it," suggested the sheriff, and, thus prompted, the boy recounted the refilling of the ditch and his eviction for trespassing.

"Pretty slick," remarked the sheriff, when the story was told. "What did you reckon to do about it?"

"Why I had thought of a plan," answered Gavan, and he explained in detail the project he had conceived that morning.

The sheriff sat back in his chair, a quiet smile overspreading his features.

"It's a smooth scheme!" he declared. "Wait here a minute, Gavan. I think I can get you a camera and the fixin's. The Forest Supervisor, here, has one, and he'd lend me his front teeth if I asked him."

He was not gone a quarter of an hour when he

came back, with as satisfied a smile on his face as if he had succeeded in getting the better of a notorious cattle-rustler or a would-be "bad man."

"Here she is," he declared, holding out a camera to the boy, "hide, hair, 'n' hoof, an' the Supervisor said you were to go right over to his place, an' he'll explain everything you might want to know about layin' the trap. But, Gavan, while I was out, I thought of a little hitch in your plan."

"What's that?" asked the boy.

"Well," said the sheriff, "as I understand it, you want to sort of fix this thing like you was settin' a trap to catch a coyote. Tell me again, just how you aim to work it."

"Well," said Gavan, "I figured that if it's all right for me to dig the ditch, it must be all wrong for any one to smash it up to bits."

"Right," said the sheriff, nodding his head, "it's interferin' with a public improvement, or, leastways, it might be took that way."

"Now," said the boy, "if I could photograph some one actually engaged in filling in that ditch, I'd have proof against them."

"Sure."

"But since they do it at night, there wouldn't

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be light enough to take a photograph, so it would have to be done by flashlight."

"Right again."

"But," the lad continued, "if I went around hunting for them with a camera and a flashlight apparatus, they'd likely see me before I could see them, and certainly before I could get the camera focussed and everything fixed."

"Another bull's-eye," the sheriff agreed.

"So I figured," went on Gavan, "that if I could fix the camera and the flashlight to a long piece of fish-line, stretched all the way along the earth that I've thrown up out of the ditch, the very second that anybody put a spade in the dirt to throw it back, they would jerk the string, fire the flashlight, and the picture would take of itself."

"Your plan is O. K.," said the sheriff, "but, as I said to you, there's a hitch in it. Do you see where it is?"

"Where?" queried the boy.

"What's goin' to happen to the camera?" the older man suggested. "Do you suppose that after they'd let themselves be took in that way, a bunch of Greasers would just stand around a while an' go home? Not on your life. They'd find that camera an' either shoot it full of holes or throw

it in the river. Anyway, you wouldn't see it again."

Gavan dropped into a chair, the picture of despair.

"I'd never thought of that!" he said. "And if I'm there to grab it, I'm trespassing again."

He pondered for a moment.

"Mr. Capton," he said, "couldn't I just hide there, and when the flashlight went off, grab the camera and run?"

"You could," the sheriff answered, "but even in the dark the Mexicans would be likely to shoot around promiscuous. An' one of the bullets might chance to hit. What's more, your evidence wouldn't be any good, because to bring it into court you'd have to prove that you were there, which would be trespassin' an' they could bring a counter-suit an' make all sorts of trouble for you about it. No, I've thought of a better idea than that."

"What?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"Sleep in the ditch," said the sheriff.

Gavan looked at him with a puzzled manner.

"I don't get you," he said.

The sheriff smiled.

"We're agreed," he said, "that you have a

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right to dig an irrigation ditch across uncultivated ranch land the title of which is held by herd law, providin' the ditch doesn't interfere with the value of the land an' doesn't rob any other people of water rights, to the extent of injuring their property. Therefore that ditch is yours."

"Well?" queried Gavan.

"That ditch," the sheriff repeated, "becomes yours as soon as you dig it."

"I don't see your point yet," declared the boy.

"If the ditch is yours," repeated the sheriff, "it's your land, too, isn't it?"

"You mean the actual ditch?"

"Sure. And if, in diggin' the ditch, you should make a place deep enough to lie in, you wouldn't be trespassin', would you? You'd be on your own land."

The boy looked eager, but dubious.

"Do you suppose that would hold in law?" he asked.

"I don't know much about the legal end of it," the sheriff replied, "but I'm right sure it would hold in this court in Taos. A white man isn't goin' to give judgment for a Mexican against a white man, special when the good o' the country's

on the white man's side. You go ahead and set your camera an' your flashlight, Gavan, an', when it gets good and dark, jest lie down full length in the dry ditch. If the scheme works an' you get the photo of the Mexicans, don't come out o' the ditch. Stay there till mornin', when you can go ahead an' work. If Moreno and the rest say anything about it, an' want to show up nasty, jest tell 'em that I told you to go ahead."

Gavan thanked the sheriff heartily and hurried over to the office of the Forest Supervisor, to learn all that he could about the setting of the camera and the placing of the flashlight.

That night, just as it was getting dusk, Gavan took his spade and widened out a section of the dry ditch deep enough for him to lie in, laid a slicker and his blanket in the widened ditch and curled himself down to watch.

He had not long to wait.

Soon after it became quite dark, the boy heard the sound of horses' hoofs and of voices, and presently he could distinguish in the starlight three or four dim forms. The boy's fingers trembled on the flashlight trigger, but he remembered the warning against haste that the sheriff

had given him, and he waited for the flashlight to blaze of itself, as soon as the wreckers should actually begin work.

A short laugh rang out on the night air, and Gavan heard one of the men say, in Spanish,

“The young fool will get tired after a while, and quit.”

Then Gavan heard the rattle of a shovel on the dry earth and, a moment later, the brilliant white calcium light of the flashlight blazed out, showing two men actually digging with shovels, a third standing by and a fourth on horseback surveying the scene.

The light flared out as quickly as it had sprung up and the resultant darkness seemed more profound than ever to dazzled eyes. Working by feel, Gavan closed the shutter of the camera, unscrewed it from the tripod and laid it down in the ditch beside him.

He had hardly done this when a shot rang out. The Mexicans, after their first start at the sudden light, were firing blindly in every direction. Gavan flattened himself in the ditch, not greatly frightened, for he knew that it would not occur to the Mexicans to fire directly on the ground under their feet. Presently, however, one of the

men, who had continued his work of filling in the ditch, found his shovel foul of the long piece of string which Gavan had used for the setting off of the flashlight. He called the attention of the others to it, and the man on horseback, the leader of the party, suggested that this string should be followed up to find where it led.

A score of steps led the party to where Gavan was lying, an inconspicuous figure from a distance, but easily discerned by any one looking directly down on the ground. One of the men struck a match, and in the flare of it, Gavan could be distinctly seen, curled up at the bottom of the enlarged depression he had made in the ditch.

A storm of curses broke out at the sight of him, and one of the men, advancing, threatened him with his six-shooter.

"Get up and out o' that!" he said, roughly.

"No," answered Gavan, quietly, from the darkness. "This is my ditch, and I've got the right to stay here. 'Hunch' Capton said so."

Just as the mention of the name of Thin-lip Jack had stopped the Mexicans from rough treatment before, so did the sheriff's name, this time.

"What was that light?" asked the leader.

"I wanted to see who you were," the boy an-

swered, wisely saying nothing about the camera.

There followed a long discussion in undertones, in Spanish, the details of which Gavan could not hear, but he gathered the purport of it to be that even if the boy did swear that he had seen them, he was a minor and his testimony could be of little value. And, if he wanted to lie out there at night, well, the ditch was two miles long, and as fast as he dug one part of it, another could be filled in. The owner of the land, Gavan judged, wanted to give the lad a thrashing, but the leader interposed, saying that they could get their way without violence, and that to beat up a lad who had the backing of the sheriff and the XO ranch at the same time, wouldn't be healthy.

"If he's got the sheriff behind him," said the leader, sensibly, "we're not likely to get the better of him at law, and the XO punchers would be only too glad of an excuse to stir up trouble. We know that. We'll play the long game. It's safest."

Whereupon, after a volley of threats, to which Gavan paid not the slightest heed, nor even deigned an answer, the men mounted their ponies and rode away.

Next day Gavan went into town and the Forest

Supervisor developed the plate. Thanks to the instructions the boy had received, and which he had followed out with scrupulous exactitude, the negative was clear and sharp. The figures of the four men were plainly shown and three of them, at least, could be recognized. The fourth, the leader, who had been on horseback, was slightly out of focus, but his horse could be recognized, although the man could not.

Two days later, the sheriff rode up to the holding of Antonio Moreno. The Mexican came out of his adobe house and scowled at the sheriff.

"What you want?" he asked.

"I've a pair of handcuffs in my pocket," said the sheriff, sharply, "an' I may want them for you. See here, you crawlin' snake," he continued, holding out a photograph, "here's a picture of you, taken the other night."

Moreno took the print and looked at it, his features working spasmodically.

"It's a lie!" he said.

"Oh, no, it isn't," answered the sheriff, cheerfully. "It would be taken as evidence in any court of law, especially with the testimony of Gavan Keary an' the others who were there as witnesses."

"Others?" There was a note of fear in the Mexican's voice.

"Of course. Do you suppose we'd have risked leavin' a boy of that age in your hands?"

This was bluff, pure and simple, but there was no way for Antonio to know it. He saw at once that if there were other witnesses, and if the photograph had actually been taken as the sheriff said it had, it would be of no use for him to deny that he had taken any part in the filling up of the ditch.

"Now you just listen to me for about one minute," continued the sheriff, "an' tell your friends what I say. In this country of Taos an' state of New Mexico, every man, white, Mexican, or Indian, is goin' to get justice. The laws o' the United States aren't a-goin' to be twisted because of a man's color or his lingo.

"But there's one thing more important than any man's color or lingo, an' that's the community as a whole. If somethin' comes up that's a-goin' to benefit the community as a whole, an' any man gets in the way o' that, well, I'm just tellin' you that he'll be walkin' on cactus with bare feet. I'm listin' that ditch o' Gavan Keary's as a public improvement, an', since it runs on your land, I

give you official warnin' that if it's interfered with, I'll hold you personally responsible an' make you repair any damages yourself.

"No, you don't need to do any talkin'," he added, as he saw the Mexican was about to interrupt, "what I say, goes. You savvy?"

The shifty-eyed Mexican tried to answer the sheriff, glance for glance, but his gaze fell under those stern gray eyes.

"I won't do nothin' against it," he muttered at length.

"Well," retorted the sheriff, "if any one else does, you'll be blamed for it, an' what's more, any hostile act against that ditch I shall take as a personal insult."

He dropped his hand so that it rested on the butt of his gun.

"I don't often overlook personal insults," he added, meaningly, and the Mexican understood.

The ditch was never interfered with after that, and Gavan, slaving under the hot sun, saw that a few days would be sufficient to finish the ditch as far as his own land.

Remembering the advice of the ranch boss, he then sought out Quick Feather and explained to the old Indian his need of a team and plow for

cultivating the ground. When he had finished Quick Feather nodded.

"Thin-lip Jack will pay?" he queried.

"That's what he said," the boy answered.

"He has hard tongue, but his words are straight," was Quick Feather's only comment.

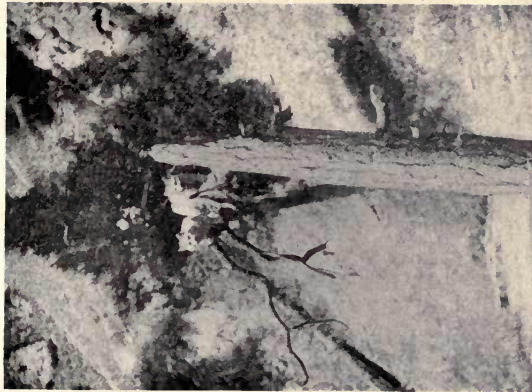
Next morning, an Indian was at work, turning over what had been a semi-desert vegetation of sage-brush, rabbit-brush, salt-brush, Spanish bayonet, and yucca, with some scattered bear-grass, exposing a dusty, dry soil which looked incapable of growing anything. But Gavan knew, even as the Indians knew, that it is only necessary to let water flow occasionally over that dusty land to produce crops that are worthy of comparison with the best farming lands of the Middle West.

The story of Gavan's fight against the Mexicans for the putting through of the ditch had been thoroughly discussed at Taos, the sheriff having spread the story of the flashlight photograph, knowing the value of favorable public opinion, and many people who had never heard of Gavan Keary before, or who, at all events, had paid no attention to Blue Joe Keary's young cousin, now went out of their way to help the lad. The supervisor of the Carson National Forest, who had lent



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

THE COUGAR SNARLED VICIOUSLY AT THE DOGS
BELOW.



*Courtesy of "Recreation."
Photo by E. J. Kerlee.*

CANADA LYNXES TREED BY HUNTING-DOGS.

the camera and the flashlight apparatus, procured from Washington detailed information as to the best hay crops that could be grown on the place and arranged matters so that Gavan could buy a higher-grade seed than that which was in common use in the valley.

"There's another thing you ought to do, too," the Supervisor told him, "and that's make use of all that foothill country back of the flats. You've got a hundred acres there that isn't worth a hundred cents to you, the way it is."

"Nothing grows there but piñon-pine, juniper, live-oak, silk-tassel, and prickly-pear," the boy answered. "I couldn't even raise goats on that!"

"Why doesn't anything else grow there?" asked the Supervisor.

"Ground's too poor, I suppose," the boy answered.

The Supervisor shook his head.

"It's the same soil as what you're plowing," he replied.

"Then it must be the slope," said Gavan. "Anyway, I couldn't make water run uphill."

"No," agreed the Supervisor, "you couldn't, but rain flows downhill."

"Sure," agreed the boy, "but when it rains

here it comes so hard that it just rushes off the foot-hills, and, half an hour after a rainstorm, the slopes are as dry as they were before."

"But if you could keep it from running off?" queried the Supervisor, "what then?"

Gavan thought for a moment.

"If the water could be made to stick on the side of a hill," he said, "why I suppose grass would grow. But I don't see how to make water stick on the side of a hill!"

"Yet it's easy enough," the Forest Supervisor answered, "once you see the way. Suppose we work out the principle of it first. What is a river?"

Gavan thought for a moment, for he saw that his questioner wanted a careful answer.

"A river," he said at last, "is water flowing down a valley from the mountains to the sea."

"And where does that water come from?"

"Rain, snow, and springs," the boy replied promptly.

"And what makes springs?"

This was a poser, but after a few minutes, Gavan hazarded,

"Rain?"

"Of course," the supervisor agreed, "though it

may have been rain that has fallen long before and is slowly filtering through rock or soil. A river, then, is only a gully to hold rain-water."

"Yes," the boy agreed, "I guess that's so."

"Very good," said the Supervisor. "Now suppose that you made a little river-bed along the side of a hill, sloping gradually the way a river bed does, the rain-water would flow the same way, wouldn't it?"

"Why, yes, I suppose it would," the boy returned, looking eagerly at the Supervisor, as the plan began to seep into his head.

"And if you made a series of little river beds or parallel gullies, say every ten yards up the hill, when it rains, instead of all the water rushing off into an arroyo or sluicing down the side of the hill, it would strike these gullies and flow slowly along them. That way, the ground would stay moist for a week or ten days after a heavy rain, because the water would be flowing in parallel lines around the hill, and soaking the ground all round them.

"Now," the Supervisor continued, "if you had seeded the side of that hill with some tough, drought-resisting grass, there's more than a chance that it would take root, and every tuft of

grass that got a hold would help to keep the soil together and prevent erosion. It would act as a natural filter, too, and hold the moisture. At first your grass would only grow along the edges of these little contour gullies, as they are called, for, in order to get the best results, these gullies must closely follow the contour of the mountains, or, in other words, they must be nearly level."

"But how can I find that out?" asked the boy.

"I've got an extra set of instruments I'll lend you," said the Supervisor, "and I'll teach you how to use them. It'll be slow work for you, at first, but it'll pay in the long run. The main trouble with this country around the Little Rio Grande and the Rio Chiquito isn't that there's not enough water, nor enough rainfall, but that the water which does come down isn't properly conserved. That two hundred acres your cousin left you, probably wasn't worth as many dollars, the way it was, but if you can turn the flats into cultivated land, and the foothill slopes into rich pasture, you could make it worth ten times as much in three years' time. And, what's more important, even, is that every piece of desert land put under cultivation is a gift to the United States. You're helping to make your country greater."

"I'll do it, sir!" declared Gavan, his eyes kindling at the idea.

"There's one thing more about improving your foothill country," the Supervisor continued. "You know how, in a rainstorm, the arroyos fill up and become torrents, sucking the water out from smaller arroyos or gullies that run into it every few yards or so?"

"Yes, sir," the boy agreed, wondering what else was coming.

"Dam those arroyos every fifty yards or so," the Supervisor answered, "cutting short ditches from your dams. Then your arroyos, which have been your greatest robbers of water, become natural irrigation channels.

"It's incredible, my boy, when you come to think of it, how little intelligent work it takes to make a section rich, instead of poor. Mother Nature is the kindest as well as the strongest of man's friends, but she has got to be humored.

"Study the world you live in, my boy, and the more you learn about it, the more you'll find how good it is to live in. Once be proud of yourself and of your country, and you'll have a country to be proud of, and the country will be proud of you."

CHAPTER IV

THE COYOTE DRIVE

WITH the aid of his three "trustees," as they liked to call themselves, and with the friendship of the Forest Supervisor, Gavan's little farm—for it was no longer merely a ranch holding—flourished.

The Mexicans had given up their fight on the irrigation ditch, and Gavan had been sufficiently shrewd to gain the favor of his former enemy Moreno, by cutting a lateral ditch to a corner of the Mexican's land in such a manner that it gave the latter a stream of water over an uncultivated stretch that his own irrigation system did not reach.

The contour furrowing of the hillsides was beginning to show results, and, next year, Gavan expected there would be a good growth of grass on the hillside. His alfalfa crop promised well, and, thanks to the XO ranch, his market was assured.

All this was most satisfactory and Gavan stuck to his work with grim persistency. Still, farming was not the work he liked best to do. His heart was set on the trap line, and he had promised the XO, that, in return for the privilege of grazing on the rich uplands, he would do his best to keep the lower part of the ranch, on which his land bordered, free from coyotes.

In this work, Quick Feather was the lad's chiefest help. Like all Indians, once he had given his trust, Quick Feather gave it thoroughly. Gavan had been anxious to tell the Indian his troubles about the ditch, but he had not dared. There is danger in inflaming the Indians and the Mexicans. So Gavan had sought the sheriff's aid, rather than that of Quick Feather. When it came to trapping, however, that was another story, for no one that the boy had ever met seemed to know so much about animals and their ways as did the Indian.

Trapping with Quick Feather was the hardest kind of work, for, old though the Indian was, he could climb up the rugged slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, slither down into canyons, and set a pace which Gavan found hard to follow. The boy would be winded and breathing heavily,

what time the old Indian showed not the slightest sign of distress. Not only that, but Quick Feather demanded of the boy that he give his whole attention to the trail, and, at a moment when the boy was gasping for breath near the summit of a ridge, having spent all his energy merely in keeping up with Quick Feather, the Indian would question him about the signs he ought to have noticed on the way up. The detailed knowledge that he expected from Gavan seemed almost incredible.

Quick Feather was utterly contemptuous of the white men in one thing. He declared, over and over again, that "the men with hair on their face" would never take the trouble to do a thing thoroughly.

"White man know a great many tricks," he said to Gavan one day; "many more tricks than Indian, but he not know them so well. Indian know only a few, but he know them well. I show you how to trap."

Now Gavan prided himself on his trapping, as he had good reason to do, for, compared with other trappers in the neighborhood, he was quite successful. Secretly, he rather doubted whether there was anything more that he needed to know,

but the old Indian soon showed him his mistake.

One day he was talking over-confidently about a coyote trail he had seen when the Indian stopped him with a sharp, sidewise glance.

"You know coyote track?" he asked.

"Of course," answered Gavan, a little hurt that Quick Feather should suppose him ignorant of so simple a thing.

"You know dog track?"

"Sure!" the boy declared.

"How different?"

Gavan looked puzzled, but he answered, promptly enough.

"It's a little hard to explain, Quick Feather, though I can tell easy enough when I see them together. The foot of a coyote is narrower, or, put it another way, the heel of the dog is rounder."

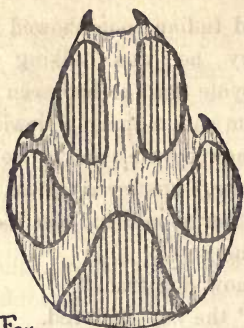
"So white man says," replied the Indian. "Not true. Many dogs have feet as narrow as coyote. Collie track and coyote track just same."

The boy protested vehemently.

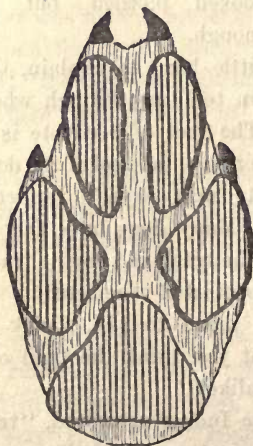
"Do you mean to say, Quick Feather," he asked, "that you think the trail of a collie and coyote are alike?"

"No," the Indian answered, "trail different."

"But you just now said they were the same."



Western Red Fox



Coyote

771P.

"Track the same," corrected the Indian.
"Trail different."

This distinction was beyond the lad.

"I don't follow you," he said. "How can the trail be different if the track is the same?"

The Indian smiled, a slow, grave smile.

"There white man make mistake," he answered.
"Quick Feather no mistake. White man look at track. Indian look at trail."

"But how can you follow a trail except by the track?"

"Poor trapper," came the reply, "see only where animal walks. That is nothing. Good trapper tell what animal thinks. That is something. If you want to be good trapper, Gavan, think same as animal."

"How, Quick Feather?" queried the boy.

"I show you," the Indian replied.

In response to a gesture, the boy reached for his hat and followed the old Indian toward the foothills. After an hour's walk they reached a place all worked over by the burrows of pocket or pouched gophers, and there, in the dust, could be seen the faint tracks of some animal of the canine family, dog or wolf.

"Coyote or dog?" queried the Indian.

Realizing that this question was put to him as a test, Gavan bent down and examined the track carefully. The general impression he gained was that the print was from a coyote's feet, but he was by no means sure. As the spot was near a trail that led to the hot springs not far away, where the Mexican women often went to do their washing, Gavan thought that there was a stronger probability that the tracks were those of a dog. Besides, he reasoned, there would be less danger of his seeming to show off if he told the Indian that the prints were those of a domestic rather than a wild animal.

"I think it's a dog," he said, at last.

Quick Feather gave no sign, either of approval or disapproval. He led the way over the sagebrush for a short distance, and then asked again,

"Dog or coyote?"

This repeated question convinced Gavan that he had guessed wrong the first time, but not seeing a definite reason for changing his mind and knowing that if he said "coyote," Quick Feather would be sure to ask him exactly why he now thought differently, he decided to stick to his first statement, and replied,

"It looks like a dog to me."

"Coyote!" declared the Indian, authoritatively.

"Why?" asked the boy. "How can you tell?"

"You look at track," the Indian repeated. "I look at trail. I show you."

He turned back on the trail a little distance.

"See," he said, "tracks go in straight line for old juniper. Little way before, swerve out. Animal comes back and smells. Not dog."

"Why not?" persisted Gavan, who was anxious to find out the old man's reasoning. "A dog will smell everything he comes across, just like a wolf or a coyote."

"Dog will smell," the Indian agreed, "but he won't circle round stump. Dog not afraid. Coyote always afraid. If dog, trail would be straight.

"You must learn to think same as animal. When coyote goes fast, he know why; when coyote goes slow, he know why. When coyote jump to one side, perhaps something frighten him, perhaps he try to catch something. Coyote, when very hungry, very scared. Coyote always hungry."

"So I've heard," the boy assented. "I was told once, in the pueblo, that when the Good Spirit

gave life to all the animals, he put them under the fear of hunger, to keep them from getting too proud."

"That true," said the Indian, "but coyote hungriest of all animals."

"Why is that?" asked Gavan.

"When Good Spirit made animals," Quick Feather replied, "he gave each one choice of animal it wanted for food.

"Said Coyote:

" 'I want Mountain Sheep!'

"Said the Good Spirit:

" 'I have given Mountain Sheep strong horns.'

"Said Coyote, again:

" 'I choose Mountain Sheep!'

"Said Good Spirit:

" 'Well. Coyote shall have Mountain Sheep for food, if can catch him.'

"So Coyote ran off to Mountain Sheep and snapped his sharp white teeth. Mountain Sheep whirled round quickly and caught Coyote on big curled horns. Coyote ran away, howling. That is why Coyote has no regular food, but eats anything can find.

"But, just same, Coyote still impudent.



Courtesy of "Shield's Magazine."

"YAP! YAP! YAP! YOW-EE-OW-OW!"

The howl of the coyotes is melancholy mad and nerve-racking. Two or three animals can emit such a terrific wailing that the noise sounds as though a hundred or more were in the concert.



Courtesy of "Forest and Stream."

THE VAGABOND OUTCAST IN GRAY.

Though over 100,000 coyotes are killed annually in the United States, their numbers are not sensibly decreasing.

"One day, Star came close to earth. Coyote saw her.

"Said Coyote:

" 'Star, come down and dance.'

"Said Star:

" 'No. Come up here and will dance.'

"So Coyote ran along moonbeam to sky where Star was waiting, and began dance. Danced so long that Moon went home. No way for Coyote go back to earth. So Coyote dropped. Drop long way and hurt great deal, and Coyote afraid everything ever since.

"Now, on starlight night, Coyote howls for Star; moonlight night, Coyote howls because he is too much coward to run along moonbeam to dance with lost comrade."

"Yet," the boy returned, "for all that he's a coward, the coyote is no fool. He may not have any regular prey, and he always looks more than half starved, but, for all that he gets plenty to eat."

"Coyote eat everything," the Indian answered. "Coyote kill anything small for him to kill, eat anything he find dead. Coyote no fool, Coyote clever, he can catch Jack-Rabbit."

"I know he can," the boy agreed, "but I've often wondered how. I should think a jack-rabbit could outrun a coyote just as easy as easy."

"Jack-Rabbit can run," assented the Indian, "but Coyote never hunt Jack-Rabbit alone. Coyote find partner. Then Coyote start running after Jack-Rabbit much fast. Jack-Rabbit start running very much fast. Jack-Rabbit not clever, run in circle.

"All the time Jack-Rabbit run, Coyote's Mate sit on little hill, watching. When Jack-Rabbit makes circle, Coyote's Mate run across to cut off path of Jack-Rabbit. When Jack-Rabbit come near, Coyote's Mate begin to run. When Coyote's Mate run, Coyote sit down to rest. So Coyote and Coyote's Mate tire out Jack-Rabbit and get dinner."

"It's a slick piece of team-work," remarked the boy, "and I've seen the same sort of thing in a prairie-dog village. I was sitting quietly by one of the underground towns, one day, watching the fat little fellows pop in and out of their holes, when suddenly a Coyote came dashing through the village at top speed.

"Quick as a wink, every prairie dog made a bolt for his burrow and the coyote ran all the

way through with never so much as a chance to snap.

“‘Ah, ha, Mr. Coyote,’ I said to myself, ‘here is where you get left.’”

“Evidently the prairie dogs thought the same thing, for no sooner had the coyote scurried through, than they bobbed out of their holes and barked sarcastic comments to each other about the fool coyote. Then, like the shadow of a cloud over the grass, came the coyote’s mate, and with half a dozen quick snaps she killed as many prairie dogs.

“Then, grinning with all his teeth, back sauntered the coyote who had made the first dash through the village and shared the meal with his mate. I would have saved the little chaps if I could, and driven the coyotes away, but since the little prairie dogs were dead, it wasn’t much use.”

“Coyote very clever,” said Quick Feather. “Apache will not kill Coyote. Apache believe that when Indian die he become Coyote and when Coyote die he become Indian again.”

“You don’t believe that, Quick Feather, do you?” asked the boy, incredulously.

“Quick Feather a Tigua,” declared the Indian, with dignity, “not thieving Apache.”

And Gavan, remembering the age-long feud between the Apaches and the Pueblo Indians, understood the prideful answer.

Meanwhile, throughout this conversation, Quick Feather had been walking at a swift pace. Suddenly he stopped, and turning to the boy, he said,

“You see, Coyote?”

There was no further doubt. The carcass of an animal several days dead had been freshly chewed and near the carcass were to be seen the characteristic tracks.

“Yes,” agreed the boy, “that’s a coyote, right enough. None of the dogs ’round here would want to tackle anything as smelly as that. Only a coyote or a turkey-buzzard would be guilty.”

He backed away, holding his nose tightly.

“To-morrow,” said the Indian, “you set trap here. Maybe you catch Coyote. Not catch him at once, by and by, three, four days. If Coyote kill something himself, he eat that. If Coyote get very hungry he come back, eat this. Coyote not forget where meat.”

“I’ve got to settle down and put out a lot more coyote traps,” remarked the boy. “I heard the other day from the XO ranch that the coyotes

were getting thick. I've kept up my trap line all right, but even with twenty traps out, I haven't been catching more than two or three a week. Of course, I've been pretty busy getting my traps in shape."

"I help you," said the Indian, "we go to-morrow."

The following morning, accordingly, Quick Feather appeared with a couple of jack-rabbits that had evidently been caught in wire snares, and asked the lad to bring out any spare traps he might have. Gavan had but two that he had not set out, and the Indian smelt these.

"No good," he declared. "Smell iron and smell Man. Put in sage-brush soup."

"What's that, Quick Feather?" the boy asked.

"I show you. Cut plenty sage-brush."

Utterly at a loss to imagine what the Indian might be intending to do, Gavan hurried out and came back in a few minutes with a huge armful of sage-brush. In the meantime the old man had lighted a big fire out-of-doors, put an iron pot on it, and started the water to boil. Into the boiling water he put the traps and then crammed the pot full of sage-brush.

"What's that for?" asked the boy.

"Coyote clever," the Indian returned. "Trap stay in house, smell house. You set trap on ground, Coyote smell house. Coyote look 'round, see no house. Coyote afraid, go away. No catch Coyote."

"But why sage-brush?" queried the boy. "Just because of its strong smell?"

The Indian shook his head.

"If trap smell sage-brush," he said, "set under sage-brush. If trap under pines, rub with pine-gum. If trap near grass, no smell at all."

The reasoning of this was clear, and Gavan stored away the information. Then, the traps duly freed from the house smell, according to Quick Feather's idea, some of the "soup" was put in a bottle and the two started out.

Presently the Indian pulled up his pony.

"Coyote scratch!" he exclaimed.

Gavan peered at the ground. Though trained to trapping as he had been by his association with Blue Joe, the boy would have ridden by without noticing anything unusual, but the keen eyes of the Indian had seen some faint marks on the dry ground.

"Coyote stop here," he said. "Coyote much like Dog. When Coyote comes where another

Coyote has stopped, he smells, like Dog. After has left smell here, runs on.

"In towns," continued Quick Feather, "houses have telephones.¹ Can talk long way."

"Yes," put in Gavan, wondering what this had to do with trapping.

"Wolves and Coyote have smell telephone," explained the Indian. "Plenty places, low bush or tuft of grass all by itself, where Wolf or Coyote will 'register.' Every Coyote his own smell, like every man his own name. Coyote can tell whether Coyote there before him was Friend Coyote or Enemy Coyote, Man Coyote or Woman Coyote, Old Coyote or Young Coyote, Full Coyote or Hungry Coyote. Can tell whether to follow, or stay away. To catch Coyote, find these 'register' places, then sure to trap Coyote near by."

Quick Feather dismounted from his pony.

"Now," he said, "we set trap. Two ways. One, set trap with no meat, near bush with smell, Coyote may walk in trap. Other way, set trap twenty paces away from smell place and put meat. Coyote comes near smell place, knows where it is, but not run right to it. Coyote never run straight

¹ The Pueblo Indians understand modern conveniences, and the younger men speak good English. The older Indians are conservative and keep to the ancient ways.

to anything, too much afraid. Always make circle around it to get all smells. If smell right, Coyote come closer.

"So, Coyote circle round little bush or tuft of grass where smell is, smell meat. Coyote hungry in morning, Coyote hungry sun-high, Coyote hungry in the night. Coyote run around meat, closer and closer, by and by get him.

"Second way, best. Not spoil smell-place. If meat too near smell-place, bad trapping. Coyote knows no other Coyote would bring meat there to eat. That would spoil smell telephone. Must learn to think same as animal," he concluded.

Whereupon Quick Feather, dragging after him one of the dead jack-rabbits, advanced on a straight line to the place where he purposed to set the trap, putting one foot before the other exactly so as to make a narrow trail. Then, wetting his hands thoroughly with the "sage-brush soup" from the little bottle he had carried, he dug into the soft ground with a stick he picked up from near by, making a shallow hole just the size of the trap. In this hole he put the trap, covered the pan with green leaves and covered the leaves with a thin layer of earth. Then he dug a narrow ditch in a curved line to hide the chain of the trap

and fastened this to a bush. After which he cut part of the jack-rabbit into small bits and scattered the pieces around the trap in such a way that the animal could not help putting his foot into the trap if he tried to snap up all the pieces.

"Catch Coyote by and by," said Quick Feather, when he had finished. Then, stepping backwards over his trail, he took the other jack-rabbit, which he had been using as a drag, and pulled it gently over the place where he had been standing, and so, the dead animal dragging behind him, he returned to his pony.

"No smell man," he said.

Gavan had watched the Indian's set with a great deal of interest, being especially struck with the care with which the Indian kept away all evidence of human smell, but his trapper's instinct was a long way from being satisfied.

"That's all right so far as the Coyote not smelling you is concerned," he objected, "but you've left all sorts of things that ought to make a coyote suspicious. A coyote can tell the smell of a dead jack-rabbit from the smell of a live one, he can tell that a jack-rabbit, after he is dead, doesn't drag himself over the ground, and he knows that a jack-rabbit doesn't cut himself up in pieces."

The Indian smiled, though evidently pleased at the lad's trying to reason like an animal.

"Coyote not Gray Wolf," he corrected. "Wolf much more hard to catch. If Coyote not smell Man, Coyote let his belly fool his head. This trap catch Coyote by and by."

Several days passed after the setting of the trap, and Gavan watched it every other day, as he did along the whole length of his trap line, but it was not until a week later that a coyote was caught. Even then, it was a young one, as yet untaught in the wiles of traps. Quick Feather's set had not been notably more successful than the boy's own.

Rather to his chagrin, the boy was compelled to admit to himself a lack of sufficient result in his coyote trapping, and a somewhat harsh remark from the ranch boss rankled in his mind.

"You don't need to forget to trap, jest because you're raisin' a little hay!" Thin-lip Jack had said.

Gavan had redoubled his efforts and put out on his line every trap he owned, or could borrow, but the coyotes were beginning to get shy. They had seen others caught and were growing wary. The boy's system of trapping, as taught him by



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BONEY MOORE HOLDING UP LIVE COYOTE.
(Photograph from the Roosevelt hunt.)

Blue Joe and Quick Feather, while excellent for catching coyotes when they were in profusion and unwary, failed him sorely as soon as the sly little animals grew suspicious and learned cunning.

"Looks like I'd better tell you how we used to catch coyotes in Texas," said Thin-lip Jack, a week later, when the traps again were found empty and unsprung. "We used to run 'em down."

"On cow-ponies?" asked Gavan.

"On cow ponies an' with dogs," the ranchman answered. "On the Double Bar P. ranch, there was an Englishman, part owner, who owned a couple of greyhounds. Most o' the rest of us had mongrels o' one kind or another. We didn't know anything about Airedales in those days. After the roundup, when the work was slack on the place, we'd fix up the lay-out for a coyote hunt.

"Maybe half-a-dozen o' the boys would pick out the liveliest brones o' their string an' we'd light out, takin' the dogs in a wagon, behind. By-'n'-by some one would spot a coyote, an' the dogs would be let slip.

"The coyote would head for the horizon, his tail between his legs, with that slinkin' way o' his, which looks like he wasn't movin' at all, but the mongrels would be left behind from the very first

jump. Not the greyhounds, though, they'd just skim along over the ground, like a prairie fire gettin' a good hold.

"Mr. Coyote, he'd sort o' look back over his shoulder, surprised like that anything should have the nerve to chase him, an' he'd see those greyhounds comin' along like a stampede, so he'd let out another link or two o' speed. But that wasn't no manner o' use, the greyhounds could catch anything that runs on four legs. The coyote, he'd pound the dust for all he knew how, but, just the same, the greyhounds would slide up to him, one on each side.

"Then, like a flash, both would dive for him at the same minute, nip him by the neck an' give him a quick toss in the air. It didn't hurt the coyote none, leastways, not much, but it sure stopped his advance a whole lot. A greyhound's strength is in his legs, not in his jaw. The minute the coyote started to run again, the two greyhounds would nip him, an' up and over he'd go like an acrobat. It wasn't any use for the coyote to turn an' fight, for two reasons, one that a coyote wouldn't fight anyway, an' the other, that if he stopped to fight, the pack of hounds and mongrels would come up all the quicker.

"But, when he'd been tossed a dozen times or so, the other dogs, an' us, on our cow-ponies, were beginnin' to range up pretty close, an' when the dogs got him, that was the end o' Mr. Coyote."

"Once in a while we'd vary the game by goin' out with the greyhounds only, an' gettin' the coyote by ropin', draggin' the varmint back to camp at the end of a lariat. It was good sport, but it didn't reduce the coyote population nothin' extraordinary. A fellow couldn't get more than three a day at the most. The dogs would be wore out."

"I wish we could do something like that here," said Gavan wistfully, "couldn't my Airedales help?"

"Sure," agreed the ranch boss, "they'd turn a coyote into a ham sandwich once they got him. But they wouldn't ever get. It takes a greyhound to catch a coyote."

"Couldn't we get greyhounds?"

"They wouldn't be no manner o' use in this country," the ranchman answered. "A greyhound runs by sight, not by scent, an' when he can't see the game, he quits. In these foothills an' canyons, a coyote could twist aroun' an' lose himself before the dogs had fairly got started."

No, Gavan, that deal only goes in prairie country."

"Why not have a coyote drive instead of a coyote hunt, then?" the boy suggested.

"That's a new one on me. What's a coyote drive?"

"It's a sort of a general neighborhood round-up," answered the boy; "I've read about them in government bulletins. I know there have been coyote drives in several of the western States, Kansas, Colorado, Idaho, Oklahoma, and Texas. I never heard of any in New Mexico, but why shouldn't there be?"

"Go on, kid," declared the ranch boss, "I'm plumb interested. What's the lay-out?"

"So far as I can make out," Gavan replied, "it's simple enough. You get together as many fellows on ponies as you can, and station them about 100 yards apart, more or less, according to the ground. Sixty riders, that way, would make a front of about three miles, wouldn't it?"

"Just about."

"Now, a line three miles long would reach right across any of these valleys and up to the top of the foothills. That bunch is to drive the coyotes.

"Out on the plain, where the creek runs into the

flat, we could get all the Mexicans and people from the villages to make a good-sized semicircle, clear from one side of the foothills across the river and the valley and to the foothills on the other side."

"I see," broke in the ranch boss, "and have that bunch well heeled with guns."

Gavan shook his head.

"In the 'drive' I read about in the Pasture Reserve in Oklahoma," he replied, "guns weren't allowed, for fear that there might be accidents. You take several hundred people with guns shooting in a half circle, some one's apt to get hit. It isn't every one that can shoot like you," he added.

The ranch boss looked up with an air of gratification.

"Well," he said, "I was just about born with a six-shooter in my hand. I'd be a dummy if I couldn't shoot a little. But what does the crowd handle if there ain't no guns?"

"Clubs, mainly," the boy answered. "Some of the cowboys carried lariats and roped the coyotes, and nearly a hundred dogs of all sorts, sizes and descriptions were there."

"I savvy," said the ranch boss. "You mean, for example, we ought to clear out the whole valley of the Little Rio Grande by chasing the coyotes

down in front of the boys. Then, when they reached the valley, all the Mexicans from the little villages around an' maybe some of the Indians from the pueblo, too, would be ready to pound the life out of the coyotes, while every dog for miles around would be havin' the time of his young life."

"That's the idea, exactly," agreed Gavan.

"Well," said the ranch boss, "Labor Day comes near the end of next week, an' we generally sort o' make a holiday out of it. Why couldn't we turn it into a sort o' general sport? A good share o' folk would come in because of the sport end of it, and a whole lot more because o' the gain in gettin' rid of the coyotes. It's a good scheme, Gavan. The cattle men will join in, sure, if the Mexican crowd will do the business in the flat."

"I'm pretty sure they will," rejoined Gavan, "if there's any chance of killing anything, the Mexicans will want to be in on it. But, if you like, Jack, I'll talk the plan over with the Forest Supervisor. If he agrees and if Hunch backs it up, every one else will follow along, that's sure."

As it chanced, the Forest Supervisor not only showed himself enthusiastic over the plan, but said he would write to the Chief of the Biological Sur-

vey for the State of New Mexico. The latter had actually been present at the drive in Oklahoma in 1904 and would be able to give a lot of information about it. By publication in the local Spanish paper, the news spread quickly through Taos, Ranchos, Comero and the adjacent villages, including the Indian pueblo. When the morning of the appointed day arrived, the whole district was keen with anticipation. The Biological Survey expert had driven up from Embudo the night before and went over the final arrangements.

Gavan, to his great delight, had been appointed as one of the drivers. He had a good pony, he was of light weight, and he knew the canyon and the upper reaches of the Little Rio Grande thoroughly. Besides, since the boy had suggested the affair, the ranch boss thought the founder of the idea ought to have a chance of choosing his part in it. The drive proper had been put in charge of the ranch boss, and he was not the sort of man whose rulings were disputed.

The cowboys who were to take part in the drive gathered at the Biological Survey grizzly hunters' camp near the head of the Little Rio Grande. Several had ridden over the night before and piled into the three small tents in the camp. Others

had started from their distant ranches before daylight. Before six o'clock in the morning, Gavan, with half a dozen men from the XO, rode to the very headwaters of the creek and started down the canyon, with shouts and pistol shots. By ten o'clock, they had reached the point of the camp, where, by this time, fifty or sixty other riders had gathered.

The cavalcade swept down the narrow valley, which at points narrowed to a canyon, and again widened out into park-like meadows. Swept is hardly the word, for rarely was it possible for the riders to do more than break into a jogging trot. Looses stones, rocky piles and fallen timber made progress difficult except on the narrow trail. Yet, slipping and scrambling, the riders saw fleeting before them, every now and again, the slinking forms of the coyotes, running as always, tail to the ground, as if ashamed of themselves.

Once, a fair-sized grizzly, driven from his feast of berries by the noise, charged up the hill towards the saddle back which led into the Rio Chiquito Valley. It was useless to try to follow him, for a bear, despite his apparent clumsiness, can go uphill almost as fast as he can down-hill, and faster than any other living creature. A grizzly, in a

hurry, in rough country, is an amazing example of muscular power and agility. Except on a flat plain, a hungry bear can catch almost anything on foot.

The character of the country changed as the men descended. Early in the morning, when Gavan had started downwards from the headwaters of the creek, he had been on the edge of the timber line in the Arctic-Alpine zone, where, although it was September, the previous winter's snow was still lying on the cold slopes, and where the spindling willow was the only tree to be found, the prevailing vegetation being moss. Few coyotes were to be found there, for the Arctic-Alpine zone of the peaks of the Sangre de Cristo range are but storm centers around which, all summer long, storms gather and roar, where sweep blasts of hail and torrents of rain which irrigate the arid plains below.

An hour's ride down the sharply pitching valley, where the little river tossed and tumbled in a succession of tiny falls and swirling rapids, brought Gavan to another entirely different zone of vegetation, marked especially by that curiously gnarled tree, the fox-tail pine, each group of needles of which looks like a green coyote's tail, though

smaller. Along some of the slopes the boy noted Engelmann spruce and cork-barked fir, the latter providing a bark good for small corks. Here and there a flitting gray-tawny form told of the rousing of a coyote.

This zone is narrow and a scant hour served to pass through it, and, descending to lower altitude, Gavan found himself in the quaking aspen country, known as the Hudsonian Zone.

A curious landscape this, where the dark-needed blue spruce and gnarled juniper gleams somberly amid the light-green and ever-quivering leaves of the quaking aspen, whose long pale shafts are covered with writings and knife-drawings made by Mexican sheep-herders in the days when the whole of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains was open range. In this zone coyotes were more numerous, and they fled before the shouts and shots of the advancing cowboys.

Farther down, again, an old beaver dam athwart the stream and the sudden appearance of tall yellow pine, handsomest of all the trees in the mountains, told of the descent into the Transition Zone. Here squirrels darted from tree to tree and Gavan recognized one of the smaller valley openings as the place where he had treed and shot



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COLONEL ROOSEVELT AND THE COYOTE.

(This, with several other pictures shown in this book, was taken during a coyote hunt on the plains in 1903.)

a mountain lion the winter before, when hunting with Blue Joe Keary. Herds of cattle now were passed, for this was among the best mountain grazing land of the XO ranch.

Still farther down, again, the appearance of the narrow-leaved cottonwood told the story of the approach of the foothills, a region so different in its character from those lying above it higher on the mountain-side that it seems scarcely possible that the two can be only a few hours' ride apart. This was the region of the juniper and piñon or nut-pine upon the slopes, broken suddenly by higher patches of sage-brush plains, where the silver-gray sage-brush is interspersed with the green penguin and prickly-pear, and where cane cactus and the Spanish bayonet or yucca flourish. On sheltered slopes a few stunted live-oak are to be found, but the prevailing vegetation is piñon, juniper, and sage-brush. Here is the favored home of the coyote. Into the lower tropical zone of Lower Sonoran, the chase did not go, for this latter zone, marked plainly by mesquite and creosote-bush, does not extend as far north in New Mexico as the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Noon came as the drivers entered the cotton-

wood and yellow-pine belt and immediately almost every man pulled a fish-line and fish-hook from his pocket, cut himself a rod and went fishing in the Little Rio Grande. Gavan and some of the younger men were set to work catching grasshoppers for bait, and, within half an hour, a mess of mountain trout, large enough for all hands, was cooking on four large frying-pans over a couple of open fires. Several loaves of the camp-made bread had been brought down, and, less than an hour after the first halt, the hunt was resumed, with the horses rested and the hunger of the coyote-drivers appeased.

It was towards three o'clock when the five-hundred or more people, gathered in a great semicircle at the point where the foothills debouch into the plain, saw the first slinking form of a coyote. They set up a great shout and the coyote, frightened by the noise, made himself scarce. The drivers were close at his heels, however, and presently, by twos and threes, then by fours and fives, coyotes began to show amid the juniper and nut-pine of the foothills, or might be seen streaking across the narrow expanse of lush grass which marks the flats of the Little Rio Grande, just be-

fore it strikes into the sage-brush plain, and falls in swift rapids into the deep gorge of the Rio Grande.

Then the watchers, waiting for the culmination of the drive, heard the shouts of the cowboys and riders. The tawny yellow forms of the fugitives now commenced to sprinkle the hills, looking, at a distance, like so many little prairie dogs. The drive was coming to a head.

The coyotes, panic-stricken by the shouts behind, and driven to distraction by the army waiting for them ahead, commenced to break away over the foothills on either side.

Then came Gavan's opportunity. Setting spurs to his little pony, he clambered up the southern slope of the foothills to head off coyotes which were trying to escape. Others, to right and left of him, followed. On the northern slope, also, the chase was on.

The coyotes, belly to the ground, started to run, the ponies after them. Here a cowboy, whirling his rope, would catch a coyote and gallop on, after fastening the rope to his horn, dragging the coyote to death over the rough and rocky ground. Others, failing in the throw, would turn the

coyotes back toward the valley, where, with the drivers behind and the crowd in front, their doom seemed sure.

The two parties neared each other with a hundred or two coyotes between. The mountains re-echoed with the shouting of over five hundred men, to say nothing of the shriller screams of the women and children who had gathered to watch the sport and at the same time, if they could, to aid in the destruction of their common enemy.

At this point the dogs were loosed. The confusion that raged among the coyotes before was now ten times confounded. A desperate mass of dogs and coyotes littered the inner part of the great semicircle. Well was it then that the authorities in charge of the drive had forbidden the use of fire-arms, for assuredly, as many dogs would have been shot as coyotes, and more feuds would have been begun in consequence than it would have taken a century to settle.

Moreover, while a pack of dogs, hunting in unison, is easily master of a coyote, it by no means follows that a single dog is so. As a matter of fact, even with trained dogs, three are none too few to tackle a coyote. Small dogs are useless, most large dogs are too slow. Hence, letting all

sorts of untrained dogs indiscriminately on the coyotes proved more disastrous to the dogs than to the prairie wolves. Though the jaw of a coyote is small—not much bigger than that of a fox—the quick sidewise snap is terrible in its execution. At the first onslaught, a fair proportion of the dogs gave back howling, with perhaps the whole skin of the side of the head ripped away by the lightning-like snaps of the coyotes as they sped by without slackening speed.

The confusion of riders behind, men in front and dogs between grew too much for the coyotes. They scattered and spread. Some bolted back among the riders, who were now scattered by reason of the opening out of the valley into the lower foothills, others dashed to the sides of the semicircle where the crowd was thinnest, and others, again, snapping viciously, sped between the legs of the crowd. A club is an excellent weapon, but hard to wield against a fleeting shadow on the ground, going at racing speed. The women and children screamed with fright. Horses attached to buggies commenced to rear and one or two ran away. The crowd, which should have maintained an unbroken front, began to waver, and coyote after coyote, seizing his oppor-

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tunity, dived through the mêlée of legs, hoofs and wheels.

The sport was fast and furious, the excitement even more intense, but when, a little later, the dead and captured wolves were brought together in the town, only seventeen were found to have been caught. Four had been roped, seven had been caught with the dogs and six had been clubbed to death. Of the hundred or more coyotes which had been driven out of the valley of the Little Rio Grande during the drive, more than four-fifths had escaped.¹

"Only seventeen coyotes for all that fuss," said Gavan to the Biological Survey expert that evening; "why, I've trapped almost twice as many as that since last spring, and I've been playing in hard luck!"

The government official nodded in agreement.

"Getting the coyote pest under control," he answered, "will never be secured by any such haphazard methods as a coyote drive. Like everything worth doing in this world, it is a matter for the expert. The problem of the coyote can only be solved by trapping, and trapping

¹ In the Pasture Reserve hunt near Chattanooga, Okla., with 150 drivers and 500 "spectators" only eleven wolves were captured. A large number escaped.



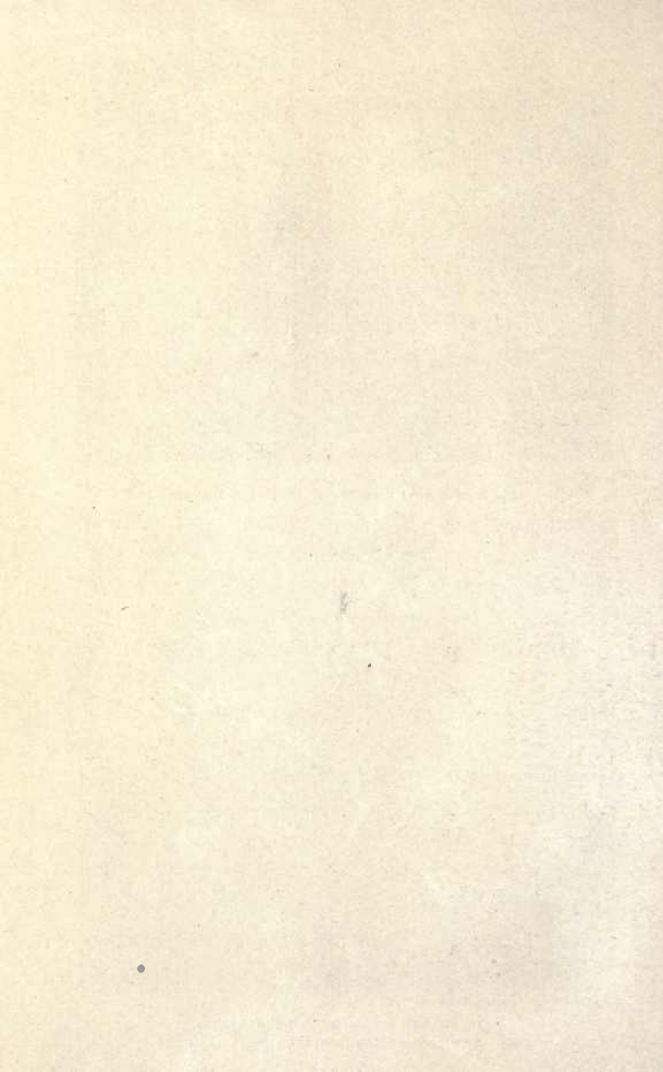
Copyright by Alexander Lambert, M.D.

LIVE COYOTE GAGGED WITH A HANDKERCHIEF.



Copyright by Alexander Lambert, M.D.

LIVE COYOTE FORE; DEAD COYOTE AFT.
 (Both these pictures are from the Roosevelt hunt.)



requires skill, understanding and any amount of hard work."

"Do you think, Mr. Winon," interposed the Forest Supervisor, "that coyotes will ever become extinct in the United States?"

"I hope not," was the surprising answer.

"Why?" asked the Supervisor, in surprise. "I thought that was exactly what you fellows on the Biological Survey were trying to do."

"No," answered the Biological Survey expert, "we do not want to make the coyote extinct but to control the pest. Wholesale slaughter is not economically sound. The coyote is not all evil."

CHAPTER V

THE SMELL TELEPHONE

"You were saying, Mr. Winon," the Forest Supervisor resumed, when the three had gone up the rickety wooden outside stairs that led to the Supervisor's office, "that the coyote was not wholly evil and that the Government was not trying to make the coyote extinct. Just how do you mean?"

"That's easy enough to see, if you think a moment," the Biological Survey expert answered. "Naturally, it mightn't occur to you at first, any more than it would to the lad, here, for the reason that you're in a cattle country. If the live-stock interests of the United States were the only ones concerned, why, perhaps it would be all right to destroy the coyote ruthlessly. But Uncle Sam can't play favorites. If there is another large industry to which the coyote is valuable, some consideration has to be given to it."

"But the coyote!" exclaimed the Supervisor.

“What earthly use can a sneaking no-account creature like that be to any one?”

The expert turned to Gavan.

“Can you think of any?” he asked.

“I was wondering,” answered the boy, hesitatingly, “if you meant—furs?”

“That’s exactly what I do mean,” the expert answered. “The fur industry is not as large as the live-stock industry, nor perhaps is it as essential to the health and happiness of the people of the United States. None the less, it is a legitimate industry, with a large capital investment and a recognized place in the commerce of the world. Now, it is estimated that coyotes annually destroy \$6,000,000 worth of live stock, principally lambs, calves, and poultry, not counting their terrible destruction of our protected wild game. On the other hand, the cash value of the coyote pelts secured annually is close to \$3,000,000.”

“As much as that?” exclaimed the Supervisor, in surprise.

“At least, perhaps more, with the continued advance in the value of furs. Now we’ll agree, if you like, that it’s good business to lose \$3,000,000 to save \$6,000,000, but it’s not good business to handle the nation’s affairs so that even \$3,000,000

is lost. The problem before the Biological Survey is to relieve the live-stock industry from this loss, and, at the same time, to safeguard the fur interests against the loss that would accrue to them by the extinction of the coyote. For example, the extinction of the buffalo is not only a loss to science, but it is an economic loss beside. Buffalo robes might well have continued a staple pelt commodity."

"I should think," put in Gavan, "that the coyotes could be handled by the bounty system."

"How so, my boy?" inquired the expert.

"Well, sir," explained Gavan, "as I understand it, under the bounty plan, where the State gives one bounty, the county another and some of the ranchmen a third, coyotes would be cleared out on the ranches and in the sections where they did the most harm, and they would be let alone in sections where they did the least harm. Of course you know better than I how it would work out."

The expert smiled at the boy.

"It looks that way," he answered, "but, as a matter of historical record, the bounty system has turned out to be a thoroughly bad one. It might, perhaps, work well in a world where every one was scrupulously honest and where no one was

selfish. Even then, however, it would have its disadvantages.

“Think for a moment of the principle that lies behind the bounty system. It pays a certain amount of money for evidence that a coyote has been killed. Sometimes only the ears were required, sometimes the scalp, rarely the whole skin. What could be more easy than to substitute the ears of a dog for those of a coyote?”

“But whoever pays the bounty ought to be able to tell the difference, I should think,” Gavan protested.

“Sometimes,” the expert said curtly, “though it’s not as easy as you might think. But various States had different methods of paying bounties, and, often enough, the town clerk or some official not well acquainted with animals was the recipient of the skins. Sometimes, too—I hate to say this, but it’s woefully true—the Town Clerk, the local judge and the bounty-claimer were all in partnership. Scores, yes hundreds of false claims have been put in, and paid, and the money split up between the three conspirators. Even if only five per cent of the bounty claims made annually were fraudulent, that would mean a lot of money.”¹

¹ As much as \$200,000 has been expended annually in boun-

"But that's just stealing!" exclaimed Gavan, shocked at the revelation that this graft was so widespread.

"Nothing else," the expert agreed. "But even the misrepresentation wasn't the worst aspect of it. The most injurious part of the bounty system was that it increased the number of animals instead of decreasing it."

"How so?" asked the boy.

"Well," the expert explained, "suppose a man was trapping coyote for bounty. He knew the country, he had a good trap line, he had built himself a comfortable cabin, he had made a number of friends. Naturally, he would like to stay there. Now, if he killed off all the coyotes in the neighborhood, he would be cutting off his own living. So, as a matter of custom, every time a bounty-trapper found a female coyote in a trap he set her free. As each female coyote has an annual family that averages about six or seven pups, he was sure of a constant supply.

"In short, instead of destroying coyotes, he was protecting them, so as to ensure a still larger income from bounties the next year. The State,

ties, by various states, counties and ranch-owners combined. Kansas, on coyotes alone, in county payments expended \$20,000 annually.

therefore, was paying for the increase of the noxious animals by the very system which was intended to exterminate them.

“During bounty times, almost 70,000 scalps a year were turned in to the several States infested by coyotes without any appreciable decrease in numbers. Moreover, since less was paid for a pup than for a full-grown coyote, the bounty-seekers would let the young grow up to adult age, without regard to their destructiveness, in order to claim the larger bounty. It is for such reasons as these that the Biological Survey is thoroughly antagonistic to the bounty system.”

“That’s why you’ve started this system of engaging expert trappers, then?” the Forest Supervisor hazarded.

“Exactly. And,” here the expert turned his keen eyes on the boy, “we’re all the time looking for good material to train. A first-class trapper is a rarity, because a good trapper has got to be cleverer in the ways of the wild than the animal he is trying to trap. He has got to beat the beast at his own game, and the wild folk put human wisdom to shame in their wise prudence and judicious fear of what they don’t understand.”

Gavan’s heart beat fast.

"I've got a little place, sir," he said, "half-ranch, half-farm, but what I really want to do is trapping. I've—I've done a lot of it."

The expert turned on him with a look of interest.

"I've been waiting for you to say something about it," he said, "because I've heard that you were engaged in trapping. You seem to have a lot of friends, youngster, and one of the things I planned to do, while here, is to have a chat with you about your work. The Supervisor has written to me about you and I've made some other inquiries. As I said, we're looking for good material to train. You're too young, yet, of course, to work for the Bureau, but you're not too young to start to get ready for such work. How would you like to be a government trapper?"

"That would be the real thing!" exclaimed the boy, in quick reply.

"Well," the expert continued, "why not? You saw this coyote drive this afternoon, and you yourself commented on how poor was the result. In fact, you said, if I remember, that you had trapped twice as many coyotes in the season as that who's hunt had produced."

"Yes, sir."

"That shows that you know something about

trapping, though thirty coyotes is not a big catch for an entire season. You ought to be able to do better than that, if the coyotes are numerous around here. Who taught you?"

"My cousin, sir, Blue Joe Keary; you may have heard of him," said the boy. "And, lately, an Indian has been giving me pointers."

The expert shook his head.

"I don't want to seem to criticize your friends," he said, "but the old ways don't work any more. It's a great mistake to suppose that the methods which were effective in frontier days will serve now. Of course, in Alaska, in the Canadian North-West Territories, or wherever game is plentiful and man is scarce, almost any bait set which is not too carelessly made will catch a certain proportion of unwary animals. But the wild folk, gray wolf in particular, learn to fear danger with a quickness that is marvelous. Moreover, they seem to be able to warn their comrades in some way, with the result that a discovered trap set, or an animal which has got away leaving a foot or some toes in the trap, will act as a warning to the entire district."

"Then how should trapping be done, now?" asked the boy.

“There’s not such a very great deal of difference in the main character of the work,” the expert answered; “it’s principally the difference between slight carelessness and extreme carefulness, and between only guessing at an animal’s habits and knowing them thoroughly. If you’ve been working with an Indian, you’ve probably learned a lot about actual following up of a trail, and your eye will have become alert for signs. That is exceedingly important, because, before setting a trap for an animal, you must know where the animal is. The other part of the art of trapping is just as important. After knowing where the animal is, or is likely to be, you must learn how to catch him.

“Let me see,” he continued, “your place is near the XO, isn’t it?”

“Not more than a mile or two out of the way,” Gavan replied.

“I’ve got to go to the ranch,” said the expert, “to investigate a report of a cattle-killing grizzly which is operating there. The Supervisor, here, will lend me a pony. If you like, I’ll ride out with you in the morning, and before I go on to the ranch, I’ll give you some ideas about trapping.”



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

TWO COYOTES TRAPPED AT THE SAME TIME.

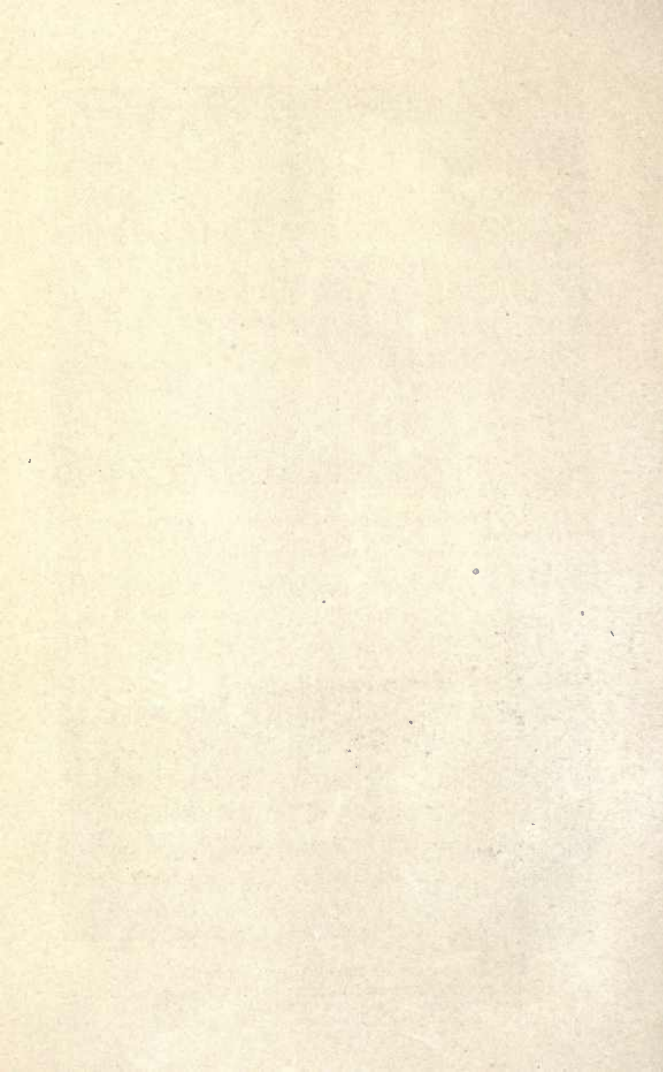
Special trappers are employed on the National Forests to try to keep down the predatory animal pest.



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

CATTLE GRAZING ON NATIONAL FOREST IN COLORADO.

Coyotes are becoming more and more skilful in the slaughter of calves and yearlings. The young of all farm animals are a frequent prey, and turkeys, ducks, geese, and hens are slain by scores.



The boy agreed with great delight and next morning the two rode out together. On reaching the ranch, Gavan showed the expert the improvements he had made in the land, and the latter listened with intense interest, closely studying the lad the while.

"And which do you like best, farming, ranching, or trapping?" he asked.

"Oh, trapping, sir!" the boy answered. "Only I don't seem so lucky at it, lately."

"There's no luck in trapping," the expert answered. "It's purely a game of skill. If you are cleverer than the animal, you'll catch him. If he's cleverer than you are, he'll escape you. It's your wits against his."

"Then one ought to catch a coyote every time! We've got more brains than a coyote."

"Maybe," the expert retorted, "and maybe not. A man's brains may be more developed, but it doesn't follow that he has them concentrated. A man has to think of a lot of things. A coyote has only to figure out how to get a meal and how to save his own skin. In trapping, you must concentrate your mind on that problem alone, to the expulsion of all others. Then you'll get Mr.

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Coyote, mighty nearly every time. It's not the cleverest man that makes the best trapper, but the most concentrated and the most patient.

"Now, son, there's just two ways to trap. One is to do things wrong so often that by and by you learn what to avoid. That is the old trappers' system. The other is to take advantage of what has already been definitely found out about the animals' habits and to work directly on those with the most improved methods. That's the scientific way. Of course, it takes experience, even when you know how, to use your knowledge to the fullest advantage, but to begin right means a lot.

"Tell me, Gavan, do you know any place where the coyotes are scratching?"

"Yes, sir," the boy answered, "I can take you right to one. Quick Feather showed it to me the other day and baited a trap with pieces of jack-rabbit there."

"Have you caught anything in that set?"

"Just one young one," the boy answered, "and that was nearly two weeks afterwards."

"Caught anything there since?"

"No, sir."

"And you're not likely to. Now, before we

start out, I'll show you how to prepare a trap. Have you any wire around?"

"Yes, sir," the boy answered, "I've got some baling wire."

"Good. Bring it out to me at the woodpile."

Gavan went into the house and came out a few minutes later with a stout piece of wire. He found the expert busily shaping a stake with the ax.

"See here, son," he said, "take a piece of wood about two and a half inches in diameter, after the bark is off. It makes no difference whether the wood is dry or green. Cut it off just about two feet long, though an inch or two more won't make any difference. Don't sharpen it to a point, but shave it down with the ax on both sides so that, from three inches from the top, it gradually tapers to an edge, something like a cold chisel. Three inches from the top whittle it with your knife gradually upwards for two inches, so as to make a shoulder on the pin. One inch from the top, the shoulder should end, with a collar absolutely straight all round. Then take a piece of wire, this way," he illustrated, "and with a pair of pliers wrap it around the pin three times, just

under the collar, so that it will fit fairly snugly. It ought to fit snugly enough, so that there is no chance of its slipping over the collar of the pin, and at the same time, loose enough so that it will slide easily around the shoulder."

"What's that for, sir?" asked the boy.

"That's to act as a swivel," the expert explained. "When the chain of the trap is fastened to that stake, and the stake is driven down clear to the head, an animal, if caught in it, can't pinch the trap and twist his leg out of it. Every time he jerks around, the wire will revolve with him. He hasn't half the chance to pull the pin out that he would if there were no play on the chain.

"Now, as you see, that leaves only an inch of wood above this swivel. If you leave it that way, and the coyote jerks hard enough, the wood might split above the collar and the wire would slip off. So, half an inch from the top, notch the wood with your knife, not very deeply, perhaps a quarter to a half an inch deep, and wrap another piece of wire around, twisting it tightly with the pliers. That will hold the head of the stake solid so that it won't split when you're driving it, and so that there's no chance of the coyote splitting a

piece of the collar off in his frantic jumps. A well-made pin like that will last you a long time, unless the end of it becomes too much used up by being driven into the ground. Besides which, stakes can be found anywhere and your pins will cost you nothing. Fasten the chain of the trap to the stake by a stout wire and you needn't be afraid of the coyote pulling away. That's not so much trouble, is it?"

"No, sir, the boy replied, "that's easy enough. But why is the stake better than fastening the trap to a bush or a clog?"

"I'll tell you," the expert answered. "In the first place, suppose the trap is fastened to a bush. You can't always find a bush growing exactly where you'd want it, and even if you do, it is necessary to disturb a great deal more ground to hide your chain. Then, when you catch your coyote, he's got a straight drag on the bush. He may run around the bush a few times, he probably will, in fact, winding the chain round the bush, and that gives him a strong purchase by which he can twist his foot out of the trap, or maybe, gnaw his leg off. Now, with a swivel, each time that the coyote jumps, the swivel turns a little. That's

apt to make the animal think that his chain is giving and he will keep at it. Also, he has no real purchase on which to twist."

"How about the clog, then?" asked the boy.

"Lots of old trappers use a clog," the expert answered, "and many of them have a great deal of success with it. But, son, those trappers are generally men who are working in the densest forests or the least inhabited places, looking for fur. What you're trying to do is to trap coyotes in a section where they're getting shy.

"There's a pile of difference between going to an out-of-the-way place to trap beasts for fur, and staying right down near a ranch trapping wary animals to get rid of them as predatory nuisances. You're dealing with the most difficult end of the problem, they, with the easiest.

"Now, son, that we've got the stakes ready, if you'll trot out the ponies, we'll go along."

The expert swung himself into the saddle, taking with him the small bundle wrapped up in canvas, that he had brought from town. Gavan guided the expert directly to the place where the Indian had shown him before. Without dismounting from the saddle, the government man eyed it carefully.

"Yes," he said, "I think this place ought to be all right. Now watch, Gavan, and observe exactly what I do. Don't miss a detail, if you can help it."

The expert then unwrapped the canvas. It was of good size and contained a second small bundle tied around with a piece of buckskin.

"First of all," he said, "I throw this canvas down on the ground, being sure that it falls always on the same side. Most of your labor will be wasted if you don't observe that small precaution. Then, dismount from your pony so that your feet come on the piece of canvas. Thus, the under side of the canvas will never have come in contact with your feet. In rolling it up, as I will show you, don't touch the under side."

"That's so as to prevent the smell of your boots and hands?" the boy queried.

"Exactly."

"But I've seen some of the trappers smear the fat from an animal on the soles of their shoes. Doesn't that act as well to disguise the Man-smell?"

"You're trapping for coyote," the expert reminded him. "Every strange smell that a trapper leaves behind him, whether it be of man or another

animal, is likely to make the coyote suspicious. You need to remember, too, that one essential point is keeping things dry. If your hands are absolutely dry and without grease, if the ground were absolutely dry, you could walk about and handle the trap without much danger of leaving a smell. But neither your hands nor your boots are ever exactly dry. On the other hand, the canvas is dry, and while, if you lay on it for an hour, your smell would go through and impregnate the ground, it won't do so during the ten minutes or so that it takes to set a trap.

"Now," he continued, unfastening the little bundle, tied with a thong of buckskin, "I keep in this a pair of gloves. Any kind of heavy gloves will do, but buckskin is the best. Don't take a glove with dye or dressing on it, just a plain glove. Use them for nothing but setting traps, and don't keep them on your hands one minute longer than necessary. Herein, too, is a small ax.

"First of all we must decide exactly where to dig the hole for the trap, choosing the site at one side of the registering place, at just about the place the coyote would stand to use the smell telephone. Now, Gavan, on which side of this little bush ought I to put the trap?"

The boy thought for a moment.

"I don't see that it makes much difference," he said.

The expert smiled.

"Oh, yes, it does," he answered. "Think for a minute of your telephone. You have to stand in front of it, don't you, to talk into the transmitter?"

"Sure!"

"Well, there's a transmitter here," the expert continued. "A coyote always comes up to an object from leeward. He will trust nothing that he has not tested out with his nose. So, to set a trap properly, you have to go to find out what is the prevailing wind. Every section of this country has the wind from one quarter more often than from the others. Here, in New Mexico, in this valley, the prevailing wind is from the south or the south-west. Where should the trap be, then?"

"To the north or the north-east," the boy answered.

"And which way lies north-east?"

The boy looked at the sun.

"It must be half-past ten o'clock," he figured, "so that the north should be that way."

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"Then we'll put the trap on that side. And, if you'll look at the ground closely, Gavan, you'll see there are coyote tracks on that side of the bush. Are there any on the other?"

"No," said the boy, peering at the ground, "I don't see any."

"Then we're on the right side for sure. Now we'll dig the hole. And," he added, "be careful how you take up the ground."

He knelt on the canvas.

"First of all," the expert said, "I scrape up with my gloved hand all the loose dirt and twigs that lie on top of the ground. That I put on the canvas to my left. Then I loosen up the top ground with the ax and scrape it, making a depth of about an inch, not more. I scoop up that soil and put it to my right. Then with the ax I cut the hole just the depth I need, perhaps two and a half inches for a trap of this size. Shape the hole angle-wise, like the wings of a big bird flying, as the jaws will sit better than if the springs are out straight. The soil from that hole I put between my knees. This may all seem unnecessary to you, Gavan, but I'll show you in a minute that it means a lot.

"Then we put the trap in the hole just about

the distance that a coyote would stand to register, setting the pan fairly firmly, so that if a bird should happen to hop across on the earth above, it would not spring it. Next, taking the earth that I had put between my knees, I sprinkle it back in the hold, carefully filling in until it is level with the pan. With this small twig, however, which I always carry, and which is bent, as you see, I carefully scrape the dirt from under the pan."

"To keep it from filling underneath," the boy agreed. "I do that, too."

"Every good trapper must, otherwise when the animal steps on the pan, it would not go down far enough to release the catch and let the springs work. Then I take the soil that I have put on the right hand and sprinkle some of it over everything until all is covered except the pan.

"Now, Gavan," he said, "here's another trick you may not know. What do you generally put on the pan, to keep the dirt from falling around and under it?"

"I use paper," said the boy, "but Quick Feather used leaves."

"Leaves are better than paper," the expert said, "because paper is manufactured and smells of

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the factory, but I use something which is better than either. I carry a lot of them with me, all cut to the proper size. They are just pieces of thin sacking, which has half rotted and has been lying on the ground exposed to all weathers.

"Anything rotted will do, an old shirt or rag. A good trapper will wash his discarded rags and spread them where the sun and rain will beat on them. Nothing that I know of seems to absorb so exactly the earth smell.

"Not only does paper never get that odor, for it will decay first, but the worst of paper is that when the animal steps on the pan, the paper rustles. Sometimes a coyote's ears are so quick that in the fraction of a second that elapses between his touching the pan and the snapping of the springs, the rustle of the paper will give him a chance to jump and he'll be caught only by one toe and so wiggle his way out. That's why I use earth-rotted cloth.

"Now, with the pan covered, I take the top soil which I had placed to the left and sprinkle that over until the trap is entirely hidden. Do you see why I divide the earth in this way?"

"No, sir," the boy said, "not exactly."

"Because subsoil has a fresher smell than

earth which has been exposed to the sun. It's true that half an hour after you leave a trap, even if you left some damp soil exposed, the sun would dry it, so that it would look all right. But the fresh deep-earth smell would be there and Mr. Coyote would know that all was not right. How could surface soil smell like subsoil? Lastly we sprinkle back over the smoothened earth the twigs and surface material that was there before."

He completed the job and then leaned back on his haunches.

"Now, Gavan," he said, "how does it look to you?"

The boy leaned over from the saddle and examined the ground carefully. There was not a sign to show that the earth had been moved.

"It looks great!" he declared appreciatively. "It's what I call a perfect set."

The expert shook his head at him sadly.

"You've got to get your eyes better trained than that," he said. "Look at the way these light bits of grass are lying," he pointed to the ground where the trap was hidden, "and then at these," pointing to a piece a foot away.

"They look the same to me," said Gavan.

"They're not," said the expert. "We said that the prevailing wind was south-west, didn't we? Then dust and very light particles would lie more or less in the direction of the wind. See, now, I'll take this small piece of canvas, in which my tools were wrapped up, and wave it vigorously over the dust a few times. That will give it the effect of a wind-whipped place, and now," he added, when he had suited the action to the words, "I think it would take a pretty keen-nosed coyote to smell anything and a keen-eyed coyote to see anything.

"Last of all," he concluded, "comes the bait."

The expert took from the bundle a small bottle (it had been a bottle for mouth-wash once) and jerked a few drops of liquid on the leaves of the little shrub.

"Not too much of it," he warned, "or the scent will be too strong. We are just doing what the coyote does, leaving a message on the smell telephone. He will be as sure to come up to that, as the average man is sure to want his morning newspaper. He wants the news of the neighborhood.

"Then, having smelt our message—which may puzzle him a little—he puts his own message there,

and in moving around to do so, places his foot in the trap. Thus Mr. Coyote is caught, and the farmers in the neighborhood will be less impoverished in the matter of lambs and poultry."

"When we get back to your cabin," he continued, "I'll give you some bait out of this bottle and tell you just how to make it for yourself.¹ And, Gavan, if you'll set your traps just the way you've seen me do, it's a pretty sure bet that you'll catch twice as many coyotes as before. The work is needed, too, for the losses due to coyotes are getting very heavy."

"Do coyotes destroy so much stock?" the boy queried.

"The damage last year," said the expert, "was estimated at \$6,000,000 in the Western States. And I suppose if one were to add all the losses, here and there, due to the coyote but not directly traced to him, such as game, it wouldn't be far out to say that the coyote causes to the farmers, live-stock and sheep raisers of the U. S. not less than eight million dollars annually.

¹ As the making of this coyote bait requires certain processes upon a dead animal, the writer thinks it better not to enter into details for the general reader. The Bureau of Biological Survey, however, will be glad to give details to any one interested in coyote-trapping.

“In many large sections of the West, sheep-raising, which was once one of the most profitable industries, has been abandoned, simply because the coyotes are numerous, large and fond of mutton. Montana, three times the size of England, and with something like forty times the available area for sheep-raising, raises only one-fifth of the sheep that England does. Why? Because of the coyote. In England every farmer or or landowner can have a flock of sheep. In Montana the only way in which sheep can be kept is in immense herds, with herders on the watch all the time to escape possible loss.

“I remember, myself, once, when I was camping near Bozeman, in Montana, a flock of about 4,000 sheep passed by and camped a little farther on. That night a band of coyotes—they don’t usually run in bands either, but generally two or at the most, three—ran into the sheep and stampeded them. Nearly 500 sheep were driven over the bluffs, while several score others limped into neighbors’ barnyards, days after, with their flanks half torn to pieces.

“Don’t forget, Gavan, that the coyote is a killer, first and last. Poultry are a choice tidbit. In the West, where the fowls range at large, a cer-



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

COYOTE TRAPPED BY FOREST RANGER.

Several different Government bureaus are engaged in the stern task of keeping down predatory wild animals.



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

HALF A MILLION SHEEP DESTROYED BY COYOTES YEARLY.

Over large parts of the South-West, the wool industry is crippled; fencing is the sole protection, and the cost of fencing is almost prohibitive.

tain proportion must be regarded as certain of loss by coyotes. Turkeys, which range far afield in search of grasshoppers and other insects, are frequent victims. In Idaho, coyotes have taken to entering the hen-roosts. One man lost 90 hens in two nights. Young pigs have no chance. Even the house cat, an animal generally well able to defend herself, is snapped up and eaten by coyotes.

“On the live-stock ranches a great many calves are killed. The coyotes seem to know when a calf is going to be born and they lie in the grass and watch the mother. After the birth, when the cow goes to the nearest water-hole for a drink and is compelled to leave the new-born calf, as yet unable to walk, the coyotes rush in and kill it. Calves several months old are easy game, and even yearlings are killed if they are a little distance from the herd.

“Any one who is trapping coyotes, Gavan, is doing a good work for his country. Interesting though the little animal may be, he has got to be kept under control. I don't say exterminated, for the coyote eats a lot of rabbits and other rodents such as prairie dogs, which are highly injurious to the farmer. But, so far as the cattle

and sheep industry is concerned, the coyote has got to go. Either that, or the sheep-raisers will have to be willing to fence."

"Why don't they?" the boy asked. "I've often thought about that. I should think fencing would settle everything."

"So it would," the expert answered, "but fencing costs money. It's no use putting up a poor fence. To start with, a dot-and-carry-one fence, a couple of feet high, will keep a coyote out the first year. But, next season, he will have found out the way to jump it. That is dangerous, for one coyote will teach the trick to another, and although coyotes do not seem to understand jumping naturally, they take to it quite readily.

"It is much more important to make a coyote fence-proof against the animals crawling under or working their way through than against jumping. That necessity means not only a very complete fence, but also a very solidly built one. It means a fence that is anchored to the ground. It means a woven-wire fence with a mesh less than 5 by 5 inches and preferably triangular. The wire should be 40 inches in height supplemented by two or three barbed wires above it 5 inches apart,

and one barbed wire on the bottom to prevent digging."

"But wouldn't a fence like that cost a lot?" the boy asked.

"It does cost enormously," was the reply. "It depends on locality and cost of labor and a heap of other factors, but I should say that \$300 a mile would cover it. Now, a section of land contains 640 acres and is exactly a mile square. It would need four miles of fencing, therefore, to take in so small a bit of land. If it were irregular in shape, probably the fencing length would be at least fifty per cent. more. A ranch of 640 acres, therefore, would need six miles of fence. But ranches of 6,400 acres are considered small, and even ranches of 64,000 acres are by no means rare. In the latter case the fence might need to be as long as 50 miles, if its shape was sufficiently irregular. Even if absolutely square, the fence would need to be 40 miles in length.

"Now a good coyote-proof fence, especially in broken country, where it is necessary to run up and down hills, over rocky and stony slopes, through gullies apt to be suddenly filled with flood-

streams and which would need damming and the like, could not be built for much less than the \$300 per mile I mentioned. To fence such a ranch would mean an outlay of at least \$15,000. Not every ranchman has that cash capital to invest, and, even if he did invest it, a good many years would pass before he would get the money back in profits from the ranch.

“Moreover, a fence has to be kept in repair. Not all people are regardful of their neighbors’ fences. Tourists, especially, are frequent trespassers. They lose their way, come to a fence, and, seeing an old but now unused trail going through on the other side, will cut the wire. Few will take the trouble to repair it again, and in any case, even with the best intention, they could not repair it as solidly as it was before. Many others, mainly motorists, will go through a gate and, because it looks as though there were not a habitation for miles, will leave the gate open.

“The world has not all become honest, either, and there are always some people on the watch for maverick or unbranded cattle, which, of course, can only be taken off the ranch by breaking through the fence.

“Slides, also, or small landslips, caused by

wash-outs, will displace and tear down a fence, and the same wash-outs will rip through a little gully no bigger than an irrigation ditch and scoop the ground away so that the fence is left high and dry, perhaps the lowest wires a couple of feet in the air. Nine times out of ten the coyote finds this out sooner than the ranchman does, and, before the fence is repaired, two or three or maybe half-a-dozen coyotes are inside the fence.

“Now, on a ranch of 64,000 acres, in rough and broken country, there are innumerable places for coyotes to hide, especially if the ranch includes some mountainous as well as prairie country. Unless those coyotes get trapped that season, which is quite improbable, next April each pair of coyotes will have from four to nine pups.

“It is easy to see that the fence is no longer any protection, and that hunting has to begin again, inside the fence, otherwise the coyotes will flourish there, and, having domesticated and fence-trained flocks at their disposal, they will find a mutton or veal dinner easy to get, will develop the taste for it, and abandon their staple foods of jack-rabbit, ground-squirrel, prairie-dog, kangaroo-rat, pocket-gopher, and field-mice—the destruction of which is beneficial to man—for

what they probably regard as a more delicate diet.

“So fencing, you see, Gavan, not only requires to be very exactly done, but also, it must be frequently examined—every week or so, preferably—and every break must be instantly repaired. On a 100,000-acre ranch, over rough country, it will take one man’s time to keep the fence in constant repair. His wages for a year, though, will be but a fraction of the amount that would be caused by predatory animal losses.

“Since, however, the government cannot demand from every rancher that he construct a fence of such expense and magnitude, it follows that we have to try to mitigate the predatory animal nuisance by trapping. As that, however, gives the rodents an opportunity to increase, since their natural enemies are destroyed, in consequence we have to wage continual war on prairie dogs and the like, to keep the balance even. This work is mainly done by poisoning.

“Now, son,” he continued, as they reached the cabin, “if you’ll trot out whatever grub you have ready, we’ll take a quick lunch and then I’ll show you exactly how to make that scent bait. After that, I must make tracks for the XO. But if, in your trapping, you’ll observe carefully what I told

you, do everything in that way and no other, never neglect the slightest precaution, and make your sets at scratching-places or smell-telephone stations, you can count on success three times out of four, and you'll clear this section of coyotes."

"I want to do that," said the boy, "because I've rather pledged myself to," and he explained the arrangement that he had made with the ranch boss, with regard to the feeding of his bunch of cattle.

The expert nodded.

"Good," he said. "And what's more, Gavan, when I see McLeod, our grizzly-bear hunter, at the camp to-morrow, I'll tell him that I've given you permission to visit and stay at the camp a while this fall and that he's to tell you all he knows. It's no use leaving your trip until too late, though, because, as you know, the winter snows are so heavy on the Sangre de Cristo that trapping can't be carried on. The lines are too long and the country too rough to be handled on snowshoes, while the drifts are too deep for a pony. You don't know much about bears, do you?"

"No, sir," answered the boy.

"I thought not. Well, Gavan, bears are even harder to savvy and to trap than coyotes. The

Indians say that the coyote is a sky spirit having a little fun, and that a black bear is a mischievous paleface boy in a fur overcoat, but, if that's so, I reckon the paleface boy has a heap more brains than the Indian's fun-seeking sky spirit. Coyote-trapping is just good practice, but bear takes real thinking. Maybe, sometime, you may be able to graduate into the most difficult field of all trapping."

"What's that, sir?" asked the boy.

"The gray wolf, son," answered the expert, leaning down from his pony to shake hands. "Keep at it, and some of these days you'll reach the pinnacle of your profession and trap an outlaw lobo."

Gavan looked up quickly.

"There's one thing harder than that, sir," he said.

This time it was the turn of the expert to be interested.

"And what's that?" he said.

"Trapping a werewolf, sir," the boy replied.



Courtesy of American Museum of Natural History.

"THE LEAN GRAY WOLF CAME OUT OF THE WOOD."

CHAPTER VI

CAUGHT IN A WILD BEAST'S DEN

THANKS to a willingness to learn and to an exact following out of the instruction of the Biological Survey official, Gavan became so expert at trapping coyotes, that the Indians of the near-by pueblo, with many of whom the boy was good friends, nicknamed him "Coyote-Smeller." Whereas, before, he had thought himself lucky if he only caught a coyote a week, now he considered himself clumsy if he failed to get at least one a day.

It was not only that Gavan had become a good coyote-trapper, but he had learned a still more important lesson, that failure was not a matter of luck but of skill. Formerly, he blamed that blind force known as chance for his failures, whereas now he blamed his own lack of skill and set himself to find out the "why" of every trap set that failed to bring results.

The ranch boss of the XO, so far as his grim

nature would permit, was very enthusiastic over the successes of his "ward," as he delighted in speaking of Gavan. There had been considerable loss on the XO Ranch during the late autumn, after the berries had gone, but the coyotes were not held responsible for this. Bear sign was plentiful, and McLeod, rather than Gavan, was the one to worry. The increase of Gavan's herd had been entirely satisfactory, and the boy had not lost a single calf or yearling from his little bunch.

Late in the fall, Gavan, going over his trap line, found in one of his Newhouse No. 3's, a large stout, broad and flat animal, with a depressed and clumsy-looking body, short stout legs, bear-like feet, with five clearly marked toes armed with powerful curved claws. Although the boy had never seen the animal before, the claws told the story. They were too long and too powerful merely to be used for attack or defense. Obviously, they were digging claws. Equally obviously, the animal was a badger, not the true silver-gray badger with the white face of the western grass-plains, but the smaller, yellower, and more vicious Mexican species, which makes its home in the sage-brush plains.

As always, when in doubt, Gavan made his way to Quick Feather.

"What ought I to do about it, Quick Feather?" he asked. "Set him free, or kill him? Is the pelt any good for fur?"

The Indian shook his head.

"Southern badger no good," he said; "only northern badger in the middle of winter is good fur. But I buy him from you."

"What for?" asked the boy.

"I buy him," the Indian repeated. "I give you a dollar for him."

"I don't want your money, Quick Feather," Gavan answered. "You've done a thousand different favors for me. Of course you can have the skin! I'll knock him on the head and bring you the pelt to-morrow, because I suppose you want to tan the hide with brains, in the Indian way."

"No kill him," the Indian replied. "I come myself and get him from trap. I pay you that dollar, just same."

"No," said Gavan, decidedly.

"I buy badger," persisted the Indian. "I give you two bits, if no want dollar."

Gavan hesitated. He knew that Quick Feather

would not be so insistent unless there were some reason for it, and the boy had had enough experience with Indians to know that no white man ever understands more than about one-half of the things his red friends may be thinking.

"All right," he said, "if you want to give two bits for the critter, come along. You want to have him alive?"

"I want him in trap," the Indian persisted.

"He won't make much of a pet," rejoined the lad, thinking of the cruelly long claws.

"I want him in trap," persisted Quick Feather, and went out to throw a saddle blanket on his pony.

Gavan said no more, and the two rode silently together along the well-worn trail between the pueblo and the boy's little adobe cabin.

Arrived at the trap, Quick Feather's actions became mysterious. He took from the bosom of his shirt a long piece of cloth, and a handful of leaves. Then, unfastening his saddle blanket, he threw it over the badger, effectively preventing the animal from using teeth and claws.

Then, holding the badger on the ground with his knees, Quick Feather released the animal from the

trap and, taking the long piece of cloth, proceeded to bandage the badger's leg, where it had been caught by the trap, using the leaves as a medicinal dressing. The wounds were not serious, for the badger has a stouter leg than any animal of its size, even bigger than that of the stocky Canada lynx, and beside, a badger's hide is one of the toughest known to natural history.

"Get in the saddle," he said to Gavan, when this was finished.

Then, as soon as the boy was seated, Quick Feather whipped the covering from off the body of the badger, slung the blanket on his pony, and, old though he was, mounted with one spring.

It was easy to see why.

The Mexican badger, foaming at the lips with rage, snapped viciously. The ponies, like most western horses, able to take care of themselves, jumped back.

Then the Indian, leaning over the infuriated animal, chanted a score of words in his own tongue, and, without another backward look, turned his horse away, leaving the badger free. He took a buckskin bag from his pocket, handed Gavan the 25 cents that had been agreed upon,

wrapped his white sheet around his head and shoulders so that only his eyes showed, and rode back solemnly along the trail.

When a sufficient length of time had passed, Gavan, who had been burning with curiosity, blurted out,

“What did you do that for, Quick Feather? Is the Badger good medicine?”

“Badger is good medicine to me,” the Indian answered; “I will tell you.

“When I young boy, I play often with another boy. He son of my father’s sister.”

“Why, you mean the one who is lieutenant-governor of the pueblo now?” asked Gavan, for he was almost as well acquainted with the politics of the pueblo as with the affairs of the State—yes, even better.

“No,” the Indian answered, “brother of lieutenant-governor. Medicine man.”

The boy understood the life of the Pueblo Indians sufficiently to know that this latter position did not mean as much as it would among the hunting tribes, such as the Sioux. The pueblo government is very completely organized. The governor and the lieutenant-governor are responsible for the relation of the pueblo to the U. S.

Government and to the outside world, the chief (a life position by election) is in charge of tribal affairs such as the various secret societies and is the historian of the tribe; the Priest, a hereditary position, controls all the ceremonial dances and is the repository of tribal secrets, and the council, consisting of the ex-governors and ex-lieutenant-governors (whose terms of office are only for one year) looks after the cleanliness and order of the pueblo.

No modern American city can compare for a moment with the cleanliness and care of an Indian pueblo. No New England kitchen is in the same class with the interior of a pueblo house. The council, also, acts as a judicial tribunal for minor offenses. The medicine men are the doctors of the pueblo, though their importance has greatly diminished since the U. S. Government has appointed a doctor to each pueblo. Among the older men and women, however, the medicine man is consulted more freely than the white doctor.

"When I small," continued Quick Feather, "I play arrow and hoop with boy, he different from me. Different from all other boys. In middle of game, he cry 'I see bird!' or 'I see bat!' Right away he follow that bird, or bat, or wolf."

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"How old were you then?" asked Gavan.

"Seven years," the Indian answered. "One morning, playing hoop and arrow, Boy called,

" 'I see sage-grouse!'

"Like always he ran off to follow.

"Night came. Boy not back in pueblo. Next day, Boy not back in pueblo. Not back next day. Chief say Boy dead. My father's sister said:

" 'No, not dead. Boy friend of spirits of animals. Spirits of animals watch him. Boy will come back.'

"One Indian in pueblo, my father's sister not like. He fond of firewater too much, think town better than pueblo. Tom, bad Indian.¹ Soon after Boy lost, Tom, coming back to pueblo from hunt, saw two badgers. Often seen Badger before. This time, Badger run at him, instead of running away into hole.

"Tom rode away. Indian not kill badgers, because badgers eat prairie-dogs, gophers, and mice, which spoil crops. Badger good friend to Indian.

¹ Nearly all the Pueblo Indians are Roman Catholics, and quite devout. They are most of them baptized and given Christian names. Often, one Indian, talking of another he does not like, will give his white name; if an Indian he respects, he gives the Indian name.

Tom think hard about Badger running at him. More he think, more angry he get. Tom decided to kill Badger.

“Bad thought. Badger no harm to Tom. To kill for food, good; to kill for anger, not good.

“Tom go back to den, see biggest Badger, shoot and kill. Tom go home, pleased. Good Spirit not pleased. Hear!

“Boy had followed sage-grouse until dark, then want to go back to pueblo. Too far. Boy young, legs tired. Stomach very empty. Too dark. Boy could not see way. Too little to know stars. Boy lie down on ground, go to sleep.

“Next morning, Boy find Badger sniffing round him. Boy friend to spirits of animals, know Badger friendly, stay and play with Badger. Boy very tired and weak. By and by, Badger go away, come back with eggs of grouse, carrying eggs unbroken in mouth.

“Boy understand, break and suck eggs.

“Then Badger, making little grunts, shuffle down hill. Boy understand spirits of animals, follow. Hundred paces away, little spring. Boy drink long time, very thirsty.

“Boy want to go back pueblo. Too tired and

weak. Two grouse eggs very little food for hungry boy, so went back badger den, fall asleep on ground by den.

“Boy asleep, Badger claw at walls of den until hole big enough for boy to crawl in. Boy sleep till sun high in sky. When Boy wake, piece of wild bee honeycomb near him. Boy eat honeycomb, go to spring, take another drink.

“Again Boy look far away to blue mountains where pueblo. Boy understand spirits of animals, now know Badger very lonely. Badger’s spirit tell him all Badger’s little babies dead, killed by wash-out. Boy very sorry for Badger.

“You think animals cannot talk?” continued Quick Feather, noting a look of incredulity on Gavan’s face. “You talk with your eyes, with your hands, with jumps of body!”

And he went on with the story.

“Boy need more to eat than baby badgers. Boy not like mice and beetles brought by Badger. Once Badger brought young chicken. Boy ate raw. Boy learned, by and by, to eat squirrel raw.

“Boy live with Badger from young moon to old moon.

“One day, Tom, riding near where killed old

Badger, see near Badger den, something moving, bigger than Badger. Tom, bad Indian, but not coward. Ride up close.

“Tom see Boy. Tom know Indians of pueblo hunt boy long time. Tom speak to Boy, but Boy hiss and snarl like Badger and creep backwards into den.

“Tom very vain, want to have other Indians praise him for finding Boy. Reach into den after Boy, grab by hair of head, pull him out, Badger following very angry. Tom not wait for Badger, sling Boy in front of saddle, leap on pony. Boy hit and bit with teeth, but Tom run pony hard to pueblo.

“Boy back in pueblo, shadow on Boy's spirit. Not say a word, not play. Boy speak no Indian, only hiss and snarl like Badger, even at own mother. Spirit of boy with spirit of Badger, only body of Boy in pueblo.

“Two days after, Tom take gun and shovel to den of Badger. Start to dig, Badger rush out. Tom shoot her. Then Tom ride back to pueblo, holding up dead Badger.

“Boy see dead Badger, cry out, using words for first time, since return,

“ ‘My Badger! Oh, my Badger!’

"Boy rush on Tom and attack viciously, with teeth and nails. Tom run to house. Tom very angry when Indians laugh at him running away from Boy.

"Then Boy fall on ground, in illness so bad, white Government doctor say Boy will not live. But Chief tell medicine men to make Badger medicine and wrap skin of Badger round Boy. Long illness but Boy get better. Now, one of medicine man of pueblo. You know him. Very silent. Chief says he talks much with spirits of animals.¹

"That why, Gavan, no Taos Indian will kill badger, but do all possible to make badger free."

"But why do you want to buy him?" asked Gavan. "Why wouldn't you let me give him to you?"

"I not bought," was Quick Feather's reply, "you would set badger free, not I."

"Yes," said the boy, slowly; "I see that. And

¹ This amazing story is actually true in every detail, save that the boy in question was white, not Indian. The lad's name was Harry Service, and the incident occurred at Bord's Hill, Manitoba, Canada. The hated neighbor was named Grogan. The author of this book was well acquainted with the Very Rev. Dean Matheson, who investigated the occurrence and who knew the Service family personally. It is, so far as the author is aware, the only authenticated case of its kind on record. Fuller details may be found in Seton Thompson's valuable work, "Life-Histories of Northern Animals."

an Indian won't kill a beast who has helped any of the tribe."

"Good Spirit," the Indian declared, "give animals to man for use. Good Spirit angry if animal killed by man for no use. To eat, yes; to wear skin, yes; to protect from evil, yes; to have for religious dances, yes; but to kill, like white man, for sport, Indian says not worthy of grown-up man. Sport only vanity, only to boast. Indian not like boasting. Only harmless animal Taos Indian will kill is skunk."

"Why is that?" asked the boy. "Just because of the awful smell?"

Quick Feather nodded.

"Long time ago," he said, "very little boy, did not know Skunk, played with Skunk. Pulled tail. Skunk turned, shot bad medicine water into little boy's face. Little boy laughing, mouth open. Bad medicine water go into little boy's lungs, he choke to death."¹

"And yet," declared Gavan, "skunk farms are increasing in numbers every year. Mr. Winon

¹ This is an authenticated fact. The incident happened in Wisconsin, in the year 1902. There are two cases of total blindness occurring from the liquid squirted by a skunk entering the eyes, and many cases of temporary blindness of long duration. Creatures of the wild uniformly leave the skunk strictly alone.

told me that over two million skunk skins are received by fur dealers annually, and over three millions of dollars are paid out for the raw furs. Mink is the only fur which exceeds the skunk in importance, among American furs, and musk-rat comes a close second.

“Now that the country is getting civilized and all the wild fur-bearing animals have been trapped, most of the furs will have to be raised on farms. Of course, if one could raise silver or black fox, that would mean a lot of money, but you can only do that in the very far north and on big island, for fox will not grow good fur if they are kept in a small place. That’s why most of the fur farms in the United States are for skunk.”

The Indian made an aggressive gesture.

“White man,” he said, “travel every trail where dollar grows.”

Gavan made no answer to this statement, though feeling it unjust to the many growers of fur-bearing animals, who must needs work very hard and under disagreeable conditions to make a living raising furs for the market. Skunk-farming, as he knew by reading in government bulletins, is a legitimate and paying business, but

one that takes judgment, experience and plenty of hard work.

Perhaps as much as any other one factor, Quick Feather's badger story stirred in Gavan the desire to know and understand animals better. The work on his farm, the assistance which he had to give on the XO ranch and the requirements of his trap line took up all his time, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he managed to get up for three days with McLeod in the grizzly-bear hunting camp. There he realized how much he had to learn and arranged to spend a part of the following summer at the camp.

The beginning of winter brought a surprise. The sheriff, from whom the boy had heard little during the summer, suddenly appeared at the ranch, inviting Gavan to come into town and spend the winter with him. It would give the lad an opportunity to go to school, and, so far as the ranch was concerned, the sheriff guaranteed that no one would touch it.

"Keep your trap line goin' until the snows come," Hunch advised, "an', in the meantime, get up all your hay an' deliver it to the XO. Don't worry about your irrigation ditches, the people around here have found out that you've got

friends enough to see that you get your rights. Next spring, when the mountain trails become passable again, you can get back to your work, an', as Mr. Winon said, you'll do well to spend some time with McLeod on bear trappin'. I tell you frankly, that if you can shape up right, I think there's a great chance for you to make good. There's no doubt that the Biological Survey needs trained men, and you've made a first-class start."

So Gavan came into the little Mexican town of Taos for the winter, and having the sheriff and the Forest Supervisor among his staunch friends, he found all doors hospitably open to him. His alliance with Quick Feather, moreover, gave him the friendship of the Indians at the pueblo, distant only three miles from the town.

The cattle he had sold had brought him a fair price and the hay crop had been good. For the first time in his life, Gavan was able to pay for everything he needed with money that he himself had earned, one of the most satisfactory feelings which any lad can possess.

The snows came on the peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and stayed there, revealing how fully they deserved the name that the Spaniards



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

FOLLOWING UP THE TRAIL.

The snow is a blank record on which the tracks of woods-folk write the stories of their lives.

had given them centuries ago. The setting sun, glowing red over the distant Jemez Mountains, and the still more distant ranges of the mountains of Arizona, flamed across hundreds of miles of reflecting sage-brush plain to strike full on the lofty ridges of the Sangre de Cristo, which are almost as high as the world-famous Alps, and which shoot suddenly upwards from the level plateau.

Then winter slowly waned. Tom Creek, Pot Creek, the Little Rio Grande, the Rio Chiquito and the rest of the mountain streams began to thunder down with the melting snows. A slightly lighter green began to appear upon the slopes, suggesting that the blue conifers were not to have it all their own way any longer, and Gavan went up into the hills to catch his pony which had been running with the XO band all winter, and to prepare for the work of the coming spring.

It had been a hard winter. The snow had been deep and had lasted for several weeks. Stock losses had been heavy, and, what was worse, the cattle remaining had become emaciated and lean. Few ranches could afford to feed hay for weeks at a time, and stockmen looked with gloomy anticipation on probable attacks from predatory animals in the early spring.

"You want to get at those coyote traps mighty quick an' sudden," the ranch boss of the XO warned the boy. "The way the cattle are now, a couple o' coyotes could pull a yearlin' down like a jack-rabbit. They'll be hungry, too, an' that'll make it worse."

"I'm going to get the traps right out," the boy replied, "and I'll do all I can to clean the place up of coyotes."

"If you do as well as you did last fall," the other assented, though grudgingly, "no one ain't a-goin' to complain. But we're already in the first week of April, son, an' some of the earliest litters are already whelped. Mr. Coyote is goin' to start runnin' around, pretty soon, lookin' for food for his new family."

"All right," said the boy, "I'll try to fix it so that we get him and the family, too. I've trained those Airedales you gave me so that they'll not only chase a cold coyote trail, but they'll even smell out a coyote den."

"I'm going to trap all I can, of course, Jack, but for the next few weeks I'm going to give most of my time to digging out the dens. You get the old and the young that way, and they never have a chance to grow up and get into mischief."

"That's the idee!" declared the ranch boss, slapping Gavan on the shoulder, "drive the last sneakin' varmint out o' the country."

Gavan thought of the Biological Survey expert's ideas concerning extinction and control, but, remembering that he was talking to a stockman, he wisely held his tongue.

Acting on common sense, rather than merely on orders, at the very opening of spring, Gavan used some bait sets, rightly figuring that the demands of a new-born family would make the male coyote especially anxious for food, and render the food lure more important than the scent lure. In this he was right, and for a week or two, the boy's bait sets caught coyote after coyote. Then, as might be expected, the coyotes became wise and wary, and the orthodox trapping by scent was resumed.

Gavan, however, had not forgotten the promise to the ranch boss that he would not confine himself exclusively to trapping. Digging the pups out in the spring, when possible, is of the highest destructive value. Often enough, the digging meant tough work, for the soil in the valleys of the streams that run down the Sangre de Cristo range is rocky and full of stones. Many a time

did the dogs locate a den which Gavan would be compelled to leave intact. The opening would be too small for the dogs to enter and the ground would be too rock-bound to yield to pick and shovel.

There was one den, in particular, which Gavan was anxious to dig out. It belonged to an old male coyote that Gavan had marked many a time, but which had been successful in evading all his traps. He knew it was the same den, for the coyote is a faithful little animal and has but one wife. Whatever the fidelity of this coyote might be, of one thing the boy was sure, and that was that, as a husband, he was a good provider. Three calves, at least, the boy was convinced he had traced to this particular marauder.

Gavan had begun to realize—between the teaching of the Biological Survey expert and that of Quick Feather—that it is useless merely to learn what a certain species of wild animal will do. It is well enough to understand the habits of coyotes, in general. It is further necessary to understand the habits of each coyote in particular.

“All coyotes not alike, all Indians not alike,” Quick Feather had explained to him one day. “I like deer meat, you like mutton. Coyote same.

Some eat antelope, some eat skunk, some eat lamb. Sometimes, Coyote eat watermelon, often eat juniper-berries and fruit of prickly-pear. Good coyote and bad coyote. Catch bad coyote, he no teach bad habits to others."

This particular coyote, then, was "bad medicine." He would be hard to catch, that Gavan knew, for he was a wily old chap, and a slight irregularity in his track suggested that he had once had his toes pinched in a trap, though, evidently none of them was off. But, and this was the important part of it, if this killer coyote were allowed to bring up a family, not only would those pups inherit the father's tastes, but they would also have the benefit of the father's education, both in the matter of killing calves and in the matter of dodging traps. One trained family of killers might do more harm on the range than twice or three times the number of coyotes who stuck to the staple food of prairie dog and jack-rabbit and only took an occasional flyer into the high living of domestic animals.

Accordingly, very early one morning, Gavan started out for this coyote den, which was situated quite high up on a rocky slope, carrying with him not only a shovel and a pickax, but also

an iron bar which could be made to serve as a crowbar. He determined within himself that he was going to get those pups, if he had to dig a tunnel half-way into the mountain. He had already tried to get in, and failed, so that he knew the stiffness of the task that lay before him.

"If I only had a stick or two of dynamite or blasting powder!" he exclaimed, when, after a couple of hours' work, he had succeeded only in loosening a few of the larger stones that were wedged in.

Another hour's work uncovered the principal obstacle. The hole to the den ran in between two stones. At first the boy thought that they were part of the original structure of the mountain and was about to give it up as a bad job, but the thought occurred to him to examine the stones, and he saw by their structure and the fact that the grains were not parallel in the two pieces that they could not have been deposited that way, but must be huge pieces of rock rolled down from the top of the mountain by the forces of erosion.

"If they moved once, they can move again!" declared Gavan, and set himself anew to his task.

An hour's probing revealed the fact that the

lower one was immovable. How large it might be, the boy had no means of guessing. At least, everywhere he probed with his crowbar, he found the same stone. The upper one was more hopeful. It was not as large as the other, though far too large to be moved. Even if Gavan had been able to clear away the earth from all round the stone, his strength would not have been enough to lift it upwards so as to enlarge the opening into the den.

Another idea occurred to him. Instead of trying to move the stone, could he chip part of it away? He could reach into the den as far as the length of his arm and he found that the interior both sloped downwards and upwards, forming a cave that would be big enough for him to crawl in, provided that once he could negotiate the opening. Perhaps the crowbar could be used as a sledge. He poised the crowbar and slung it, loosely grasped, against the stone.

A chip flew off.

Gavan shouted with triumph. This was the way, then! It would take time, but the boy knew that if the female wolf was in the den she would not come out, and the pups could not escape, any way.

When lunch-time came, the hole was twice its original size, and Gavan could get his head and one shoulder in, but not quite the other. Another hour's work would accomplish it, without doubt. This continuous hammering on the stone, however, loosened it to a considerable extent, so that it rocked slightly. Gavan stopped to ponder for a moment, whether he ought to return to his original plan of trying to loosen the position of the stone, then decided not. The hole was nearly big enough for him, as it was.

Rugged perseverance will accomplish the seemingly impossible, and by three o'clock in the afternoon, the hole was big enough.

Gavan prepared to enter the coyote's den.

He was not afraid, for he knew that a coyote is one of the most cowardly animals on earth. At the same time, it was not wise to be reckless. Even a coyote mother, if she had cubs, might fight, and, as the Indian had warned him over and over again,

"No animal same as other animal. No two alike!"

So Gavan took his little electric lamp from his pocket, pushed the spring and thrust it into the entrance of the den. Then, drawing his six-

shooter and holding it in his hand, he propelled himself forward into the den as though he were diving.

The entrance was very narrow. It was a tight squeeze, but his head and shoulders got in.

The den was deeper than he thought. Gavan could hear the faint squealing of the little pups, evidently, by the sound, only two or three yards in from where he was crouching. He flashed the light from side to side, but a large pebble lying half-way down and partly choking his further passage, also obstructed his view. The pebble was not too large to be moved, and, thoughtlessly, Gavan gave a wrench and moved it aside.

As he did so, a little dust rattled down on his back and he felt something from above touch his hips.

For a second Gavan's heart stood still.

It must be the male coyote, the killer!

Then sober second thought returned. No, a coyote would never try to push past a man trying to enter its den.

He moved his leg cautiously.

The truth flashed on him.

The hole by which he had entered the den had become smaller.

In moving the pebble which had obstructed his further passage into the den, he had shifted what had acted partly as a prop to the larger stone, which had settled, and was further slowly descending so as to close the hole.

Frantically, Gavan tried to back out. He could get his hips and legs out, he could get out as far as his stomach, but the ribs would not pass, and he knew that if the ribs would not, the shoulders could not.

The situation was grave. No one knew that he was there. He had even tied the dogs fast before he left, for he knew that he would be working all day at this hole.

Pinned like an animal in a trap, he was doomed to die the same death that he had given so many of the wild folk.

The boy struggled back desperately, only to become convinced that every move loosened the stone above him and rendered escape still more impossible. He slid forward again, as gently as he could, and, in so doing, saw his light reflected in two pin-point gleams which he knew must be the eyes of the mother coyote.

There was no harsh or cruel gleam in those

eyes, nothing like the savage yellow gleam of the cougar, for the coyote has soft, gentle brown eyes which are in striking contrast to its habits. Just the same, Gavan knew enough about coyotes to be sure that those soft brown eyes could be trusted but little. As long as he was alert, the cowardly coyote would slink back to the farthest corner of the den, and even allow her babies to be taken. It would be only if she herself felt that she was in danger that he might expect that quick vicious snap that was so appalling in its results.

On the other hand, the moment that the coyote should know that the boy was weakening, with that curious sense possessed by the wild folk which tells them instantly of the mental condition of a foe, that moment the coyote might risk a forward dash and a snap.

It would be easy, the easiest thing in the world, simply to shoot the coyote. The six-shooter was ready, the light reflected in the animal's eyes showed him exactly where to fire.

But Gavan dared not shoot.

He had, inadvertently, removed the big pebble which had acted as a prop to the greater stone overhead, and he feared that if he fired in that

enclosed space, the vibration and the vacuum combined would further loosen the stone and it might fall on him and crush him.

He took his revolver by the barrel and crept on. He was very near the coyote, now.

There was not much room to reach up, but with all the force that the limited space would allow Gavan suddenly thrust forward the electric light fair into the animal's eyes, partly for the purpose of dazzling it, and partly so that, if the coyote should snap, it should snap on the metal of the lamp. Then, with the other hand, he brought the butt of the pistol full on the coyote's head. There was not room enough for a killing blow, that he knew, but even if the creature should be stunned or dazed for a half a minute, that would suffice.

The coyote half rose and then rolled over.

Quick as a flash, Gavan wrenched from around his neck the brightly-colored handkerchief that he always wore—in admiring imitation of the cowboys of the XO—and, grasping the coyote firmly by the snout, he tied the jaws firmly together. That done, he breathed more easily. The four pups he also knocked on the head, not because their teeth were long enough to inflict

any serious injury, but because even the slightest scratch from a coyote's teeth is a good thing to avoid. It is not as terribly dangerous as a scratch from a timber wolf's teeth, which, more often than not, causes death from blood poisoning, but still, it is dangerous enough.

Then Gavan tried to turn to go out. He twisted and squirmed and tied himself up in all kinds of knots, but the hole was too small. He had felt that if he could only get so that he was pointing head first out of the hole, the strength of back and shoulders might enable him to move the stone just enough for him to wriggle through. But it could not be done. There was nothing for it but to back out again, and try to force himself through the hole by raising the stone with his hips.

So, feet foremost, Gavan backed out again to the entrance, only to find that the stone had sagged still lower. Feet and knees passed through, but the hips were a tight fit. None the less, by using all his force, Gavan managed to get them half through.

He stopped, panting, to take breath.

Then, summoning all his strength, he drew his knees closer under him and heaved upwards.

The stone moved.

With triumph surging through him, he shot backwards, sure of escape.

But the stone was too heavy, and the very second that the upward pressure was relaxed, it sagged downwards again, catching him in the small of the back and the pit of the stomach.

He could move neither forward or back.

The pressure was not great, but the sudden realization that he was trapped even more strongly than before, was unbearable. He wriggled fiercely, insanely, but at that point in the body there is little muscular force.

Even to himself, afterwards, Gavan was loath to admit it, but at this point panic seized him, and he screamed and struggled blindly. In his frenzied efforts he twisted a muscle or a tendon, giving him a sharp pain in his side, and partly from the fright and partly from the pressure of the big rock on his intestines, he became violently nauseated. The resultant weakness, hunger and thirst brought on a stupor, into which the boy sank as evening came on.

He was roused, towards dark, by some animal tugging at his leg. Dimly and hopelessly, he muttered,

“That’s the male wolf, come back!”

It was a horrible sensation, feeling that a wild animal would chew his leg slowly at leisure, tearing away flesh and muscles while he was still alive, pinned under the rock and unable to do anything. But the tugging continued.

At first Gavan assigned his freedom from a tearing wound to the tough leather chapparejos or "shapps" that he wore, a necessary part of his outfit when riding through the rough mountain country, where gnarled bushes scraped all the time against his legs as he rode, and where the trail was so narrow between the close-growing quaking aspens, that, unless he were thus protected, an injury to the kneecap was more than probable.

But a few minutes' reflection, even though it was the workings of a brain sick, wrenched and despondent, caused Gavan to think that no "shapps," no matter how tough, would greatly hinder the teeth of a good-sized coyote, which can tear horse-hide and cow-hide as though it were tissue paper. Besides, with all of the lower half of his body outside, the part of the body on which he sat in the saddle, and which of course was not covered by the leather "shapps," was practically exposed.

Why did the coyote tug at a leather boot, in-

stead of ripping his flesh open where it was unprotected?

Was it a coyote at all?

A sudden hope, bright as though the sunshine had suddenly flooded the dark coyote den, flashed into Gavan's mind.

He whistled shrilly.

Outside, a familiar bark responded.

It was no coyote, it was one of his Airedales, who, with that strange prescience possessed by dogs had sensed his master's danger, wrenched himself loose and trailed his master to the coyote den. Arrived there, he had found the leg sticking out of the hole, and after a whimper or two had brought no response, he had started to try to pull his master out, with true dog intelligence, smelling the coyotes within and supposing that his master was in some sort of trouble.

For a long time the pulling continued, then, as suddenly it stopped.

Gavan whistled. There was no answer.

Had the Airedale gone? If so, where? The boy knew enough about dogs to be sure that the terrier would never have deserted him unless there were some plan in his doggish mind, so he waited hopefully for what might come. Despair

had vanished with that tugging at his left boot-heel.

Two hours later, Quick Feather, standing by the low mud wall which encircles the pueblo, listening to the younger men singing their unison chants, as Pueblo Indians do almost every evening, heard a sharp bark, and a slimly-built Aire-dale bounded up and put its two paws against his chest.

The Indian looked down at the dog. He did not pat it, as a white man would. Indians rarely caress animals.

"Gavan's dog," he said. "Where Gavan?"

The dog barked, ran away a few steps, came back and barked again.

"Rope chewed through," remarked the Indian, noting that the rope fastened to the dog's collar had been bitten, strand by strand. "Dog run long way."

Quick Feather then carried out his constant advice to the boy to "think like an animal." He stooped down and looked into the dog's eyes.

"Dog in trouble," he concluded, "Gavan in trouble."

He swung off with the long silent step of the Indian to the corral made of poles, with which the

pueblo is surrounded on three sides, and came back a moment later astride of his pony. Quick Feather was old, but there were few young fellows in the tribe who could move more quickly when needed.

The dog leaped up and barked joyously. It was not necessary to be a reader of dog language to know that Quick Feather had guessed right.

Before leaving the pueblo, however, Quick Feather dismounted again and looked thoughtfully at the dog. Then he called a boy who was standing near and gave him an order. The lad ran off and returned a few minutes later with a long piece of binder twine—for the modern Indian is a good agriculturist and understands the use of improved farm machinery. This the Indian tied to the dog's collar.

"Dog in trouble," he said, "run too fast for pony. Lose sight of dog."

Whereupon, he remounted the pony and set out at a steady lope, the Airedale pulling steadily ahead.

To Gavan, waiting in the hole, the time seemed endless, but, after an interminable delay, he heard the welcome sharp bark, and whistled in reply.

Then, almost before he was aware of it, the long

iron bar that he had left beside the hole, when he chipped the pieces away to enlarge the entrance, was thrust in, and the rock over his back lifted.

With a gasp of relief, Gavan backed out, his breath coming sharp because of the twist that he had given himself, and his whole body feeble with the strain. Still, despite the pain, he scrambled back into the open and the pine-scented fresh air, and then was seized with another attack of nausea. Not till the spasm was over, did he recognize his rescuer.

"How, Quick Feather!" he said. "How did you find me? Was it—" and he threw one arm around the Airedale's neck, and fainted.

Picking the boy up in his arms, though he was no light weight, the sturdy old Indian carried him the mile and a half back to the cabin, pony and dog following behind as though they knew and understood.

CHAPTER VII

EARTH'S LARGEST CARNIVORE

SEVERE as had been Gavan's experience in the coyote's den, a day or two soon put him on his feet. For months afterwards, he had an occasional twinge in his side, where he had strained himself trying to wriggle out of the trap, but not of any consequence. Nothing, however, would induce him to creep into a coyote den again. If the little beasts could be dug out, well and good, if not, Gavan contented himself with fastening some large-sized fish-hooks on a long pole and pulling out the pups that way.

The bounty offered by the XO added quite a snug little sum to Gavan's savings, and, although the pelts were not worth much, he found that the adults he trapped in the early spring had a pelage sufficiently dense to be of value. Though New Mexico is too far south for good furs, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are high and the cold winters

and heavy snows produce, in some years, a prime article of fur.

By the time the ground was ready to be worked and put in shape for next year's hay crop, Gavan had taken over a hundred coyotes, including pups. Acting on the suggestion of the Forest Supervisor, moreover, he had made a point of writing every week or ten days to the Biological Survey expert concerning his work, in order to keep himself remembered. Gavan's heart was set on becoming a government trapper, sooner or later.

Towards the end of May, when the crops were in and growing well, one day, Gavan, riding along his trap line, saw a track on the ground which gave his heart a jump. Reining his pony to one side, he jumped off and examined the mark carefully.

"If I believed in fairy tales," muttered the boy, "that would be a giant, going barefoot!"

He dropped the lines over the horse's head, so that the animal might graze and yet not get far away, while he examined the print.

The track was pointing down-hill, on loose ground around a gopher's burrow, but there was little definite, only a faint flat impression which certainly was not cow, horse, or human boot. It

was so faint, and yet so large that the thought occurred to the boy that it might have been made by a hawk's or an owl's wing, as one or other of these pounced down on a gopher.

"If it's a bird's wing," said the boy, half aloud, "there won't be any other mark. If it isn't, there must be. But it's almost big enough for a young elephant!"

So, scanning carefully the ground, Gavan circled warily around the suspected track until he came to a place where the ground squirrels had been busy digging out their burrows. Here, he knew, was his best chance, for he had learned that even the wary coyote has not become aware of the fact that trotting over the loose earth near these burrows will leave a track plain for any one to read.¹

Finally, almost straight down-hill from the former track, Gavan found another. This one was comparatively clear and distinct, that is, to trained eyes. Although a western trapper would have seen it from horseback, an eastern boy, even though it were pointed out to him, and who got down on his knees to look at it, would have seen

¹ Incredible as it may seem, some old outlaw wolves have learned this and show an uncanny ability in avoiding ground which would leave a track.

nothing but an indeterminate smudge on the ground.¹

At this second track, Gavan looked long and intently. There was no doubting what it was.

"That's a grizzly!" he declared. "But what a monster! He must be the grandfather of all the bears."

Then, stooping down, Gavan measured the track. It was longer, from the heel to the front of the ball of the foot, than his two hands would span, and beyond that, again, could be seen the print of the toes. Still farther, some barely traceable furrows in the dry earth showed the narrow claws.

"Sixteen inches!" exclaimed Gavan, and whistled. "It's a whale of a bear!"

True to his trapping instinct, Gavan's first thought was to try to catch that bear, but no sooner had he formulated the idea in his mind than he dismissed it. He had no trap among his collection larger than a No. 4½ and nearly all

¹ The author was much impressed with this, when working in the Taos Mountains in the preparation of this book. A government bear trapper, riding at fair speed, followed and distinguished the trails of two bears, although these trails were so faint that the author was only able to trace them vaguely by dismounting and regarding the marks fixedly. And the author is not new to trapping, either!

of them were 3's and 4's. It needed very little figuring to see that even the $4\frac{1}{2}$, with a spread of jaws of but eight inches, would never hold a creature with a foot such as the track showed.

His success in trapping coyotes had also taught Gavan one of the first essentials to a good trapper, namely, never to make an unsuccessful set. Better no trap at all than too light a trap, in which a large animal may be caught and wrench himself free. Such a mistake merely educates the animal, and makes him ten times as hard to catch as formerly.

For a while Gavan ruminated over the track.

"Guess I'd better tell McLeod about this," he finally decided. "If I do anything, I'll only scare him off the place and he may be the cattle-killing grizzly that Mr. Winon talked about last fall. McLeod's got the traps and knows how to go about it. I don't."

As Gavan had long promised himself the pleasure of a week with the bear-hunter, and as his crops were sufficiently advanced to be let alone for a few days, Gavan decided to take his vacation at once. He wrote to the Biological Survey chief that he had found a grizzly bear track and was going up to McLeod to tell him about it, for

the lad shrewdly reasoned that the more he showed his interest in other forms of trapping beside coyote, the more chance there was for him in the Biological Survey.

This done, he sprung all his traps and brought them home, knowing the unwisdom as well as the cruelty of untended traps, slung a couple of bags of provision on either side of his saddle, so that he would be able to keep up his share of the grub of the camp, and rode up to the cabin where the riders had gathered for the famous coyote "drive" of the autumn before.

He reached there before dark, finding the camp deserted. Whereupon, knowing the ways of the camp, he hustled out, pulled into a heap the butts of half a dozen dead quaking aspens—which lay around the ground by thousands—ran the loop of his lariat around them and dragged the pile downhill to the camp. A few strokes of the ax cut these into four-foot lengths and five minutes later a huge fire was roaring in the fire-hollow.

The boy roused about to find some bread, but not discovering any, decided that McLeod must just have run out. So, placing the iron pot in the embers, to get reasonably warm, Gavan proceeded to mix up the flour, salt, and baking-powder with

water which he had placed near the fire for a minute or two to take the chill off, removing the iron pot as soon as it became too warm. The top of this pot (known as a camp Dutch oven), which is countersunk, he then placed in the hottest part of the fire, until it got very hot. Next, placing the pot on a small tripod, near the fire, he lightly (very lightly) kneaded some of the dough until it formed a flat cake about an inch and a half thick and the size of the pot round, then dropped it in the heated pot. The super-heated cover was then put on, a shovelful of red embers was piled on the lid, and a shovelful of red embers placed under the tripod below the pot. Thus was secured an even, steady heat from top and bottom. In five minutes, the bread had risen to a loaf three inches thick, and in fifteen minutes it was thoroughly baked and brown.

The fire, by this time, had burned down to clear embers, and the coffee-pot was put on to boil, while potatoes were being peeled and the bacon cut into slices for frying.

Presently the barking of dogs was heard, and a couple of minutes later, McLeod rode into the clearing.

"Howdy, Gavan," he said, "come to try your hand at trappin' grizzlies now?"

"Just want to see how you do it," was the reply. The hunter made a grimace.

"How we don't do it, you mean," he answered. "There's a brute around here that's makin' his breakfast, dinner, an' supper regularly on the XO cattle, an' I can't either get a look at him nor persuade him to take a nap in one of my traps. I'm plumb disgusted an' that's what!"

The hunter was unsaddling and hobbling his pony as he spoke, and presently he swung through the two V-shaped trees which formed the gate to the fence surrounding the camp.

"I've got something to tell you about that," answered Gavan, "but I guess it can wait. Supper's ready."

The hunter cast a swift look at the preparations, slouched over to the rough table with the bow-legged walk that wearing "shapps" always produces, broke off a bit of the newly-baked bread and looked round at the boy with a nod.

"I'll hire you as camp cook," he said with a laugh. "This grub is all to the good."

Gavan knew that his prestige was assured.

While not an "old-timer," he could be said "to belong."

Supper over, and the dishes washed—for however often unwashed dishes may be seen in city kitchens, they are unknown in any decent camp—Gavan commenced to tell the hunter about his discovery of the bear-track this morning.

"I don't want to seem as though I were putting it on too thick," he concluded, when he had described the exact place where he had seen the track, "but it was at least sixteen inches long. I measured it this way—" he spread his two hands on the ground, "and it was longer than that."

The hunter looked at him with a dry chuckle, as he pressed the tobacco deep into his pipe.

"That bear must ha' walked a long way," he suggested.

"Why?" asked Gavan.

"Because I ain't ever seen no bears with a track like that, this side o' Alaska. I used to get a few monsters up Cook Inlet way, when I was a young fellow an' got the craze to go huntin' for gold instead o' bear. Fact, I don't believe there's any bear in the world, anywhere, but in Alaska, that's got a track more than twelve or thirteen inches long, at the outside."

"Well," said Gavan, "if the Alaskan bear is the only one that makes a track like that, then it's an Alaskan bear!"

"If it's an Alaskan or a Kodiak bear," the hunter responded, "I reckon I'll let him alone."

"Why?" asked Gavan.

"Because he'll roast to death in New Mexico an' there won't be any need to trap him," the hunter answered with a grin. "Besides I ain't hankering after Kodiak bears, nohow. I'd rather have something easy, like a mad elephant, or a man-eating lion."

Gavan saw that he was being made game of, but he knew nothing about Kodiak bears, he had never heard of them before, so he pretended not to see the irony of the hunter's replies, and asked,

"Is a Kodiak bigger than a grizzly, then?"

"Is a timber wolf bigger than a coyote?" the hunter snorted. "Yes, my son, a Kodiak is a durn sight bigger than a grizzly an' don't you forget it. I've trapped a right smart lot of grizzlies, durin' the last twenty years, all of a hundred, I should say, but around 700 pounds was the heaviest I've ever run across. Most o'them are a good deal smaller than that.¹

¹The heaviest grizzly on record was a bear in the Lincoln

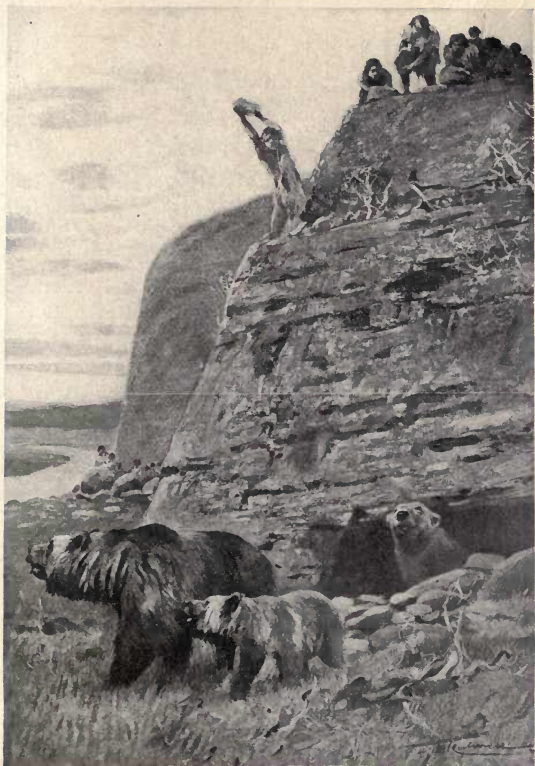
“While as for Kodiak bears, I’ve seen ’em that run 1600 pounds, an’ some have been shot which weighed 1800 pounds an’ more. You won’t be far out if you reckon a Kodiak bear as being generally a little more ’n twice as big as a grizzly. Winon, the other day, told me a Kodiak bear was the largest carnivorous animal livin’, an’ that it could make hay of an African lion or a Bengal tiger.”

“Did you ever have a run in with one, McLeod?” asked the boy.

“No,” the hunter replied, “I can’t say as I have. I’ve shot a few, four altogether, but I didn’t shoot until I had a sure bead on them, an’ I wasn’t using bird-shot either. I carried a 45-90 with soft-point bullets, an’ only once out of the four times did I have to shoot twice. No. I have no kick.

“But I happened to know Wabash Bill, who got pretty badly mauled by a Kodiak bear, an’ his experience made me even more scary o’ gettin’ mixed up with the monsters. Like every wild animal that I ever heard of—except a skunk or a

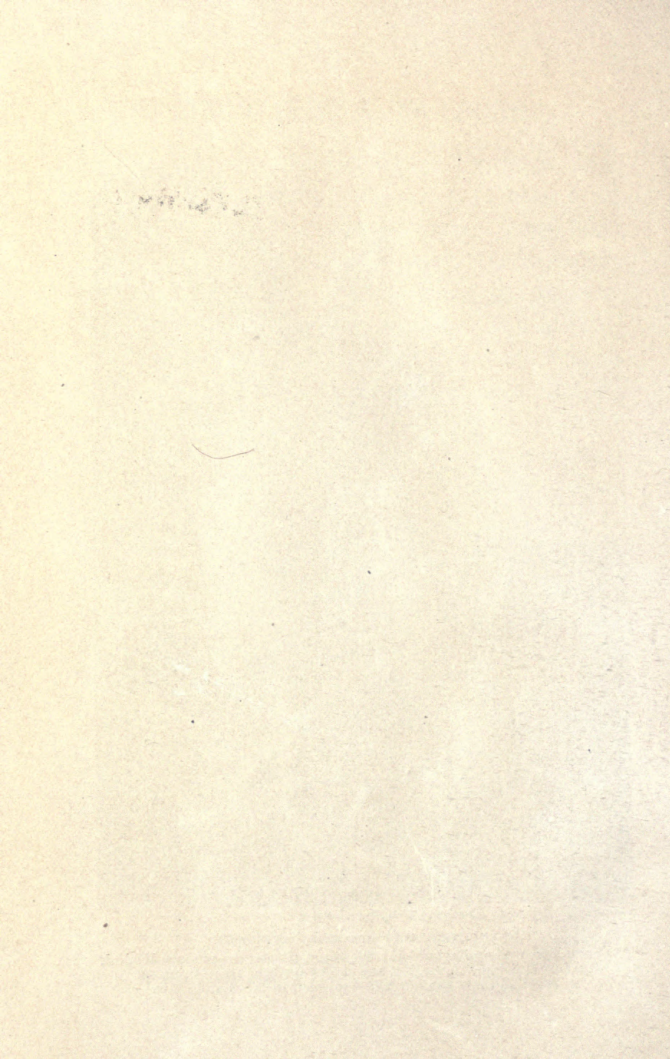
Park Zoo, in Chicago, which weighed 1153 pounds, but much of this was soft fat which would not have been on the animal in a wild state. About 850 pounds is probably the limit of a big grizzly in its native state.



Courtesy of American Museum of Natural History.

PREHISTORIC MAN AND THE CAVE-BEAR.

The cave-bear was probably about the same size as the modern Kodiak bear (1500 pounds in weight, and more) but was more thick-set in build and less dangerously equipped in tooth and claw.



porcupine—they'll run the minute they smell, see or hear man. But if you get in wrong with a Kodiak bear, you're in wrong for sure."

"What happened to Wabash Bill?" queried Gavan, eager for the story.¹

The hunter looked smilingly down at the excited lad, and, after a few puffs of his pipe, began:

"On the mornin' of August 7, 1900, Captain William H. Royden, of the schooner *Wabash*, an' better known to most of us as 'Wabash Bill,' findin' his larder shy o' fresh meat, went ashore after deer. He was anchored in Rodman Bay, Alaska, at the time.

"Wabash Bill was an old hand at the game. He knew the woods as well as he did the decks of his schooner, an' he was as good a frontiersman an' guide as he was a pilot. Every one knew Wabash Bill all along the coast. Any one would have said that he was as well able to look after himself as a full-grown grizzly might be.

"In the summer months, the deer in that part o' the world browse high on the mountain-slopes,

¹ This story, written originally by Alfred E. Bennett, in the *Wide World Magazine*, was reprinted by *Field and Stream*, after thorough authentication, as "one of the most extraordinary authentic stories of human endurance, following injuries received from a wild animal." It has been confirmed in every particular.

close to timber line, where the meltin' snows leave moss-beds an' young green grass exposed. There's rich eatin' up there, an' deer, as you know, don't like hot weather. So Wabash Bill, when he started out, knew that he was in for a long climb, but he was a sportsman through an' through, an' though he declared that fresh meat was his goal, it was the sportin' end of it that appealed to him just as much.

"Deer were plentiful, an' the captain, sure of baggin' his game an' tired from the long climb, decided to wait at a convenient spot an' let the deer feed on up toward him, instead of goin' to all the trouble of a long an' difficult stalk over high grass flats made marshy by the meltin' snow. So, concealin' himself in a clump of scrub willow, not far from a patch of snow, the sturdy old boy ate a midday lunch an' settled himself to wait for his quarry.

"Around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, a small fat buck stepped out from a thick fringe of underbrush an' sniffed the cool, pure air for a suspicious taint. There was nothing to arouse his suspicion for Wabash Bill, naturally, had stationed himself on the lee side o' the flat, so that no wind should blow from him towards the feedin' deer. The

buck, therefore, bent down to crop the sprouts in a moss-bed, not more'n 200 yards from where the hunter sat.

"The captain's rifle spoke once. Before the echoes had petered out, Wabash Bill was standin' over the little animal, which had dropped in its tracks. His skinnin' knife was ready, an' with the expertness of years of practice, it only took him a few minutes to dress the body. Then, havin' washed away the blood on his hands in a brook fed by the meltin' snows, he leisurely smoked a pipe—which he had not dared to do before for fear a whiff might carry to the sensitive nostrils of the deer, an' with the buck on his shoulders, began his climb down to the ship.

"The schooner lay some three thousand feet down an' two miles to the right, an' Wabash Bill, rememberin' the roughness of the trail he came up, chose a course straight for the water as the shortest cut through the forest.

"For an hour he battled with clingin' underbrush an' thorny devil-clubs, stumbled over fallen logs an' sank ankle-deep in boggy places. Mosquitoes an' flies—an' believe me, son, the Alaska mosquitoes can give odds to any other mosquitoes in the world in a biting contest an' win out handily

—attracted by the smell of the blood on the deer, nearly drove him crazy. Besides, it was hotter'n South Texas on a windless day. Can't it get hot near the Arctic Circle! It's like the inside of a stew-pan over a dry oak fire.

“At last he worked his way through the scrub growth an' reached the larger timber. There the travelin' was easier as the undergrowth was not so dense. It was rough goin', still, though, an' at times, Wabash Bill told me, he could scarcely see the ground for the swarms of flies, mosquitoes, gnats, an' other insects around him, while the whiz of their wings sounded like the entrance to a busy bee-hive.

“The slope was steep grade an' he had still three-quarters of a mile of durn stiff mountain-side to go down, but the trees had opened out a little. They were very closely set, however, an' their branches meetin' overhead shut out the sunlight. It was right gloomy, dark shade with clearin's here an' there, park-like open patches full of long grass. An' every separate blade of grass was the home of a tribe of mosquitoes, all hungry an' plumb energetic.

“Tired, perspirin' an' exasperated almost beyond endurance by the stings of the insects an'

the perpetual crawling of flies over his sweat-drippin' face, Wabash Bill went onward an' downward, thinkin' only o' gettin' to his schooner as quickly as he could, lookin' forward to strippin' and takin' a swim, icy though the water would be.

"Then, as he crossed a small clearin' an' entered the thick again, he passed between two wallopin' big pines standin' close together on the edge of the forest.

"It is one of the iron rules of bear-hunters, as I told you last fall, Gavan, never to go between two big trees standin' very near together, but Wabash Bill was either too irritated by the mosquitoes to think about the rule, or else too tired an' worked up to take the dozen or so steps out of the way. Anyhow, he took a chance, an' stepped between the trees.

"Suddenly, without the slightest warnin' save a deep-throated savage snarl, a great brown she-bear sprang upon his back an' bore him face downwards to the ground, tearin' a patch of skin from the back of his head with her teeth, as he fell.

"Squalling and bawling with rage and joy, a couple of half-grown cubs—either of them the size of an ordinary black bear—joined their mother, clawin' an' bitin' at Bill as he lay on the ground.

"Wabash Bill could offer no defense. His rifle had been jerked out of his hands as he fell, he had no revolver, and his knife was in his pocket.

"Moreover, there was no chance to use a weapon, even if he had one, for the old bear stood right over him, the spittle from her bloody jaws pourin' down on his neck.

"The cubs alternately bit an' clawed at his trunk an' legs, keepin' up a savage growlin' all the while.

"Poor Bill bore the excruciatin' pain in grim silence, with his elbows held close to his side, to protect the abdomen. Had he fallen on his back, or had the brutes thought of turnin' him over, he would have been ripped up or had his throat cut in an instant.

"Though half stunned an' nearly mad with pain, Wabash Bill realized that his only salvation lay in keepin' still an' protectin' his throat an' abdomen. A bear finds no sport in a dead victim, an' he knew that many a man had been saved by playing 'possum.

"At last the bears drew off a few feet an', sittin' on their haunches, watched their prey, lickin' their blood-flecked chops an' snarlin', Bill said,



*Courtesy of "Field and Stream."
By arrangement with "Wide World Magazine."*

"WITH A LOW GROWL, THE SHE-BEAR LAUNCHED
HERSELF UPON HIS BACK."



"THOUGH TERRIBLY CLAWED, THE CAPTAIN STAGGERED
BACK TO THE SETTLEMENTS."

like a dozen circular-saws goin' through water-logged timber.

"Filled with hope, Wabash Bill lay motionless, exertin' every ounce of will-power he possessed to keep from movin'. He hardly dared to breathe.

"Suddenly, his right arm quivered involuntarily, by a reflex action, as one of those bitin' bulldog flies settled in a gaping wound that had been made by one of the cubs, an' which had exposed the muscles of the shoulder.

"Instantly the old bear was upon him, with a dreadful roar, an' seizin' his wrist in her teeth, bit it through.

"Human nature couldn't stand no more, an' Wabash Bill, weak from pain an' loss of blood, fainted. Then the she-bear, givin' him a last slap with her massive paw which struck his right thigh, led off her cubs, still growlin', through the forest.

"When Wabash Bill regained consciousness, it was dark, an' swarms of mosquitoes buzzed around him, feedin' at his wounds an' stingin' his half-naked body. Every wound was stiff and cold an' his throat burned with an awful thirst.

Makin' a painful effort, he broke off a couple of fern-stalks that lay just in his grasp an' laid them over his face to keep away the insects, then lapsed once more into unconsciousness.

"From this swoon he came out into a half stupor an' lay there for three days, half conscious."

"Three days!" exclaimed Gavan.

"Three days," the hunter repeated. "They must have passed like a horrible nightmare, the cold wet nights, the burnin' heat of the middle of the day, the perpetual stings of a thousand mosquitoes an' the intolerable yalkin' an' bitin' o' cattle-flies over his gapin' wounds.

"Brain fever came to help him out, since it made him feel his sufferin' less, though one thought burned into his fevered mind like a brand-in' iron — Water!

"Insensible now to the pain of his wounds, the thirst-crazed man half crawled, half rolled down the mountainside, an', by a lucky chance, happened upon a little trickle o' snow-water. Drinkin' long an' deep, an' lettin' the icy water run over his wounds, which, o' course, were full o' dirt an' leaves, to say nothin' o' the infections brought by insects, Wabash Bill regained his

senses only to find himself worse off than before with a gnawin' hunger an' a feverish throbbin' in every nerve an' muscle of his body.

"Wabash Bill, however, was made o' the stern old stuff we used to call Americans in this western country, not the soft city dudes whose only idea is to buy somethin' cheap an' sell it dear (the hunter was an inveterate hater of tradesfolk) an' he had western grit in his will an' red blood in his veins, though the bears had drawn out a lot o' the latter. He set out to work his way through the more than half a mile o' thick forest that lay between him an' the beach; followin' the stream.

"His right arm was entirely useless, but with his left arm an' knee, he struggled on, foot by foot. He soon found it impossible to follow the stream, an' right soon his burnin' thirst started in again. Sticks, leaves, thorns an' dirt worked into the open wounds on his head, arms an' legs, an' a hunger gripped him with an agony that got worse every hour.

"Keepin' his tongue moist by lickin' leaves an' moss, now an' again findin' just one or maybe two salmon berries to eat, which kept his tongue an' lips from crackin', Wabash Bill pushed on,

more often than not rollin' down-hill a yard or two an' bruisin' himself further by landin' against a stone or tree, his strength bein' unequal to the job o' proppin' himself up on one knee to crawl. Still, foot by foot, he got down the hill, alternately droppin' into a feverish sleep, or faintin' with the unbearable agony of his injuries.

"On the sixth day his sufferin's were made worse by the approach of rescue. He heard the signal shots of a searchin' party but was unable to answer. Spent with hunger, fatigue and pain, his nose broken an' closed, his head swollen from a cuff given him by one of the cubs, his tongue parched an' his breath exhausted, his effort to cry out in response sounded only like the distant echo of the bawling of a bear. Probably it could not have been heard a dozen yards away. The shots receded an' grew fainter, an' Wabash Bill became unconscious once more.

"Later, just when he did not know, he found himself strugglin' downwards an' saw, about a quarter of a mile away, the blue waters of the bay dancin' in the sunshine. Once, he thought,—an' it may have been true, at that—he saw his own schooner through a rift in the trees.

"Comin' to a small level spot, where the force

of gravity couldn't help him out by lettin' him roll down, Wabash Bill found himself, to his despair, unable to cross. He strained every shred of the remnants of his tremendous vitality, every fiber of his wonderful nerve, in a vain effort to reach the slopin' ground again; but his desperate struggle was useless and he collapsed, pantin' weakly.

"A big snail crawled within reach of his hands.

"He seized it, an' ate it ravenously. Then, after a hard struggle, he succeeded in reachin' a few salmon-berries.

"It's a wonder, Gavan, what one bite of food will do for a man dyin' of hunger. Hope revived in Royden's breast, an' he waited an' prayed for another scrap of food to lend him strength to get to the water's edge.

"As if by miracle, it came.

"Suddenly he heard a wild screamin' an' flutterin', an', turnin' his head with a violent effort an' a wrench of pain, he saw an eagle an' a fish-hawk fightin' in the air above him.

"A second later, he saw the bushes move, as a falling object plumped into them, only a few feet away.

"A choked cry of joy burst from Wabash Bill's

throat as he realized what had happened. He had seen this thing happen many times before, when an eagle would strive to rob a hawk of a fish. He knew that food an' another chance of life lay at his hand.

"The nearness of his goal, the sight of his vessel in the bay, his love for life, an' the one fragment of food—the snail—gave him the strength of a superhuman effort, an', inchin' himself over the level ground as a wounded caterpillar crawls, Bill drew himself toward the bushes.

"The victorious eagle flew in circles above him, utterin' harsh cries, hatin' to leave the fish it had fought to get an' yet afraid to approach the strange creature which crawled nearer and nearer to the flashin' trout.

"How the starvin' man reached the fish he never knew, but at last he held it in his hand, still wet an' quiverin', an' never stopped chewin' until he had stripped the last bone of the rich, juicy pink flesh.

"Overcome with his efforts, Wabash Bill fell asleep an' slept until noon of the seventh day. On wakenin', he found his strength was wonderfully renewed by the meal of raw fish, an' so

continued his weary journey at once. Gamely he struggled on an' at last dragged himself out on the wet rocks of the beach.

"His ship lay some 200 fathoms away. She had been standin' up and down the bay for a week, in a vain search for her missin' commander. A sailor on the deck stood unseein', while the captain feebly waved his arm an' strove to call out.

"Presently the man began workin' at the anchor chain. The schooner was preparin' to get under way.

"He was to die, after all, at the very door of hope!

"Then, with a last despairin' effort, this man who had gone as far in sufferin', I guess, as any man has ever done, staggered to his feet for the first time since the bear struck him down, an' throwin' his last ounce o' strength into an animal-like cry, fell face downwards among the rocks.

"The man on the deck of the schooner saw his captain fall an' all hands got busy with a rush. Signal guns were fired to tell the searchers on the beach to return to the ship, an' a boat put out on the instant, with stimulants, food an' medicines.

"They found Wabash Bill delirious, emaciated, an' covered with innumerable wounds in a shock-in' state.

"Rollin' him in a blanket, they took him aboard an' made all speed for Sitka. Arrivin' there on the evenin' of the 14th, the eighth day after the captain had left the ship, Wabash Bill was hurried to the Naval Hospital.

"Surgeon H. G. Grieve reported the captain's injuries to be: 1, a broken nose, with the bone badly crushed into the flesh; 2, the bone exposed over the right temple; 3, the left ear hanging by shreds at the top and bottom; 4, two severe scalp wounds, exposing the bone of the skull; 5, the right forearm and shoulder badly bitten; 6, bones of the right wrist crushed and displaced by bite showing where the huge bear's teeth met; 7, deep wound in the left thigh; 8, two large wounds on the right thigh; 9, five severe bites in the right leg; 10, right leg swollen and black with a tendency to become gangrenous! In all, no fewer than 64 separate bad wounds were counted, not to mention deep scratches an' bruises, many of the wounds infected an' all in a bad state."

"Did he die?" asked Gavan.

"Thirty-seven days later," the hunter replied,

“Wabash Bill was discharged from the hospital in good physical condition, an’ he left Sitka next day, expressin’ his intention to go back to Rodman Bay an’ get even with the bear which mauled him. Those are the kind of men America breeds,” the hunter concluded, “but even so you’ll understand why I’m not achin’ to have a set-to with a Kodiak bear.”

“But do you think,” the boy asked, “that track I saw can be that of a Kodiak?”

“I don’t, for a minute,” the hunter answered, “but whatever it is, you an’ I will hike down tomorrow to see. We can’t have bears with a sixteen-inch track roaming loose over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, not while I’m around!”

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENTRAPPED BEAR

"SPEAKIN' seriously, now," said the hunter, the following morning, as he and Gavan squatted on their heels in front of the camp fire, eating breakfast, "how big do you think that track was?"

"I was speaking seriously last night," answered Gavan. "Honest, I was! I measured the print by spanning it with my two hands and it was more than sixteen inches."

"An' how wide?"

"It wasn't very wide, four or five inches I should say. I didn't measure the width."

"An' goin' down-hill?" the hunter queried.

The boy thought for a moment.

"Why, yes, it was," he admitted, "but what made you think that?"

The hunter smiled.

"We'll go and have a look at it anyhow," he said, "but I'm layin' ten to one that it isn't a Kodiak bear, that's sure. It may not even be a grizzly, son, it may only be a good-natured hulk

of a black bear rummagin' around for ants' eggs, or grubs or the like."

"It seems queer," said Gavan, "when you come to think of it, that a body as big as that of a bear should secure its enormous strength from ants' eggs, and bugs, and berries and stuff of that sort. One would expect a grizzly to be pulling down cattle and antelope and game of that sort all the time. But I suppose he can't run fast enough to catch them."

"Don't you fool yourself about a bear's not bein' able to run," the hunter answered. "That shufflin', flat-footed gait doesn't look as if it amounted to much, but if ever a bear takes after you, don't try to get out of his way by runnin'. No, siree! You head for a tree an' shin up it like you were a scared cat."

"That would be all right for a grizzly," Gavan agreed, "but how about a black bear? I thought black bears could climb trees."

"They can," the hunter replied, "an', when pursued by dogs, sometimes they will. But, ninety times out of a hundred, if a black bear's chasin' you an' you go up a tree, he'll give up the chase. Of course, if he's slightly wounded an' mad plumb through, he may climb after you an'

matters will become mighty unpleasant if you haven't a gun. Wait till we get on the trail an' I'll tell you what happened to a hunter I knew some years ago in Colorado."

While Gavan saddled his ponies, McLeod took the haunch of an aged burro which had been killed that morning for bear-bait a couple of days before, and loaded it and a big bear-trap on a pack-mule which the boy had also brought up when he wrangled and corralled horses. Started on the trail toward the huge bear track that Gavan had seen the day before, the boy asked McLeod for the promised story.

"That Colorado hunter who escaped from the bear?" the hunter queried. "It was a queer start, as I remember, it happened something this way: Shortly before noon this chap had seen a black bear a long way off an' had shot at him. The bear scrambled away without seemin' much hurt but this fellow followed up the trail. Presently he got good an' hungry an' sat down to take a lunch o' cold fried trout he had brought along. He was a systematic sort of cuss an' had brought along all the proper fixin's, even to a little screw-top bottle o' salt an' pepper mixed, which he kept in his pocket.

“Just while he was takin’ a bite, he heard a roar behind him an’ saw the bear chargin’ out of the bushes. His rifle an’ six-shooter were both in the saddle holsters an’ the horse, grazin’, was maybe twenty yards away.

“There wasn’t much time for thinkin’ what to do, but this old-timer made about three jumps to the nearest tree, the bear bein’ only about a jump an’ a half behind him. He swung himself up into the branches an’ began to slide aloft as fast as he could. The bear, although an adult, bein’ angry because o’ the shot, commenced to climb after him.

“This was more than a trifle annoyin’, for the hunter had no weapon with him except his huntin’ knife, an’ he had savvy enough to know that you can’t make a hole in a bear’s skull with a knife. Then, feelin’ in his pockets, his fingers closed around the small bottle, an’ a great idea hit him. Pourin’ a handful of the mixed salt an’ pepper in his hand, he waited until the bear was right close an’ dashed half of it full in the beast’s eyes. The bear roared with pain an’ surprise, an’ the old-timer chucked the rest of it into the open mouth.

“His little pig-like eyes smartin’ like he’d been

stung by yellow-jackets an' his throat smartin' so that he started coughin' like a lunger, the bear backed down the tree, an' the minute he touched ground, he set off as fast as his legs would carry him, coughin' and sneezin' as he went. I guess that's the only time I ever heard of a bear being roused by a pepper-pot.

"But, son, as I said before, don't trust to your legs if you get into close quarters with a bear. If you can't find a tree, play 'possum rather than run. A grizzly can chase down a herd of cattle any time, except upon a flat, open plain. In a park-like stretch, like where you rounded up the ponies this mornin', a bunch of steers, at top speed, can just about keep ahead of a pursuing bear, but if the trail narrows an' gets rocky, or if the bunch turns into undergrowth, an' especially thick timber, a bear can catch a steer as quickly as a terrier can a rat. An' one blow of the big forepaw of a full-grown grizzly will knock down the biggest steer that ever tossed a horn on the Staked Plains."

"Then why," asked Gavan again, "doesn't a grizzly stick to that kind of grub?"

"I suppose for the same reason that you don't

want to eat nothin' but meat all the while," the hunter answered.

"Why should he? A bear is what books call an 'epicure.' He's a huge intractable despot, if you like, but his eatin' is wide an' promiscuous. No other beast that I ever heard of will eat so many different kinds of food as a grizzly. He'll eat any kind of fruits, grubs, roots, vegetables an' every kind o' flesh except human an' coyote. Old Ephraim just dotes on acorns, ants, an' grasshoppers. He has a likin' for apples an' peaches, in season, an' yet will take all sorts o' risks with his big carcass to dine off a young colt. He'll travel miles to lap wild honey from a tree and will eat watermelons an' green corn by the bushel. He likes raw potatoes an' will run an awful chance to snatch a porker from a sty. He can make a meal from an ant-hill, an' will rob birds' nests every chance he gets. Queerest of all to see, I think, is the way he'll sit motionless for hours on the bank of a mountain stream an' watch his chance to snatch a fish from the water.

"The bear isn't really a carnivorous animal, exclusively. Even the Polar Bear, which comes nearest to the carnivores, will eat berries on the

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Arctic tundra in the summer-time, though his regular meal is seal, young walrus an' fish. But, while a bear is omnivorous, I never heard of a grizzly that didn't need a meal of fresh meat, now an' again, though much of it seems to be bad for their stomachs."

"Why?" asked Gavan.

"Well," said the hunter, "I've noticed that whenever a bear takes to eatin' a lot o' fresh meat—an' especially if he gets to robbin' farmers of their pigs—he seems to get a violent indigestion. I've seen 'em, in patches of camas or wild lily, diggin' up an' eatin' the pungent, bitter roots, with tears runnin' from their eyes an' bawlin' with pain from the burnin' taste. That's the same root, you know, that some o' the Indians used to eat in famine time, mixin' it with clay so that it shouldn't gripe the stomach too much. An' you can take it as good sign that a bear which is eatin' camas root is a bear which has started cattle an' hog killin' an' is a good one to go after.

"Of course," he continued, "the habit that most bears have o' turnin' over stones to lick up the ants' eggs an' the white grubs which live beneath 'em, affords a good way of trackin' an' you would



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

WYOMING BLACK BEAR TAKING HIS EASE.



Copyright by Frederick K. Vreeland.

OLD UNCLE EPHRAIM.

The grizzly bear rarely becomes a cattle-killer, but when he does, the losses he causes are enormous.

be surprised at the size o' the stones they can turn over. Then, again, a rotten tree ripped to shreds is another sign that a bear has been feedin' on the big white grubs that make long galleries under the bark. They will pick 'em out with their long slender claws as neatly as you could spear a potato on a fork. The armed feet of a grizzly are a sort o' combination of a crane an' a crowbar, a pick an' shovel, knife, fork, spoon, an' forceps. A bear can use two of his claws as delicately as a Chinaman's chopsticks, yet a slap of his paw is like being hit with the side of a mountain. It's a darn good thing that bears, as a whole, are such good-natured beasts or they'd be more dangerous than man-eatin' tigers."

"But you think an unwounded bear isn't ever dangerous?" asked the boy.

"Never," said the hunter, with assurance. "If you'll let them alone, they'll let you alone. A black bear will scamper away like a mouse. A grizzly, especially a she-bear with cubs, isn't so easily scared. Unlike most of the wild folk, she doesn't get flurried. She isn't quarrelsome, exactly, as you might say, but careful of her dignity. If the trail is narrow, it is wiser for you to

make room than to force her to do it. If you step aside, she'll pass you as politely as a Frenchman.

"There's another thing, too, about bears," the hunter continued, "an' that is that there's more individual variation among them than there is about most kinds of animals. You can't always tell what a grizzly is goin' to do, especially, as I said, a she-bear, but there's one thing dead sure, an' that is, that whatever she is going to do will be done durn quick. The flat-footed walk gives the impression of a slow animal, but the bear isn't slow-witted. His brain acts like chain-lightnin' an' his muscles respond just as quick.

"When you see a grizzly, Gavan, if you ever do, make up your mind quickly whether to shoot or to keep still. If you're goin' to shoot, wait until you can get him side on an' aim with killin' effect in the neck to break the spinal column. I, myself, have seen a bear, shot through the heart, go on runnin' at full speed an' strike a blow, which, had it reached, would have smashed me into pulp.

"I remember once—"

Here the hunter broke off suddenly, as the boy reined up his pony.

"There are the tracks," said Gavan.

The hunter smiled.

"I saw them five minutes ago," he said, "the bear walked along this very trail we've been ridin'. It's a grizzly, I should judge, but not a very big one."

"But the track!" exclaimed Gavan.

"I knew last night," the hunter answered, "what had fooled you about that track. It isn't very wide, is it?"

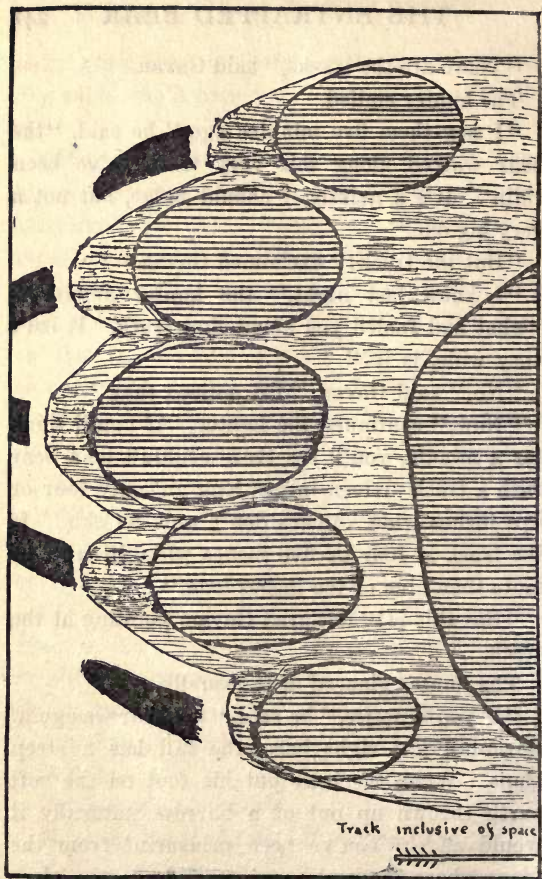
"No," said Gavan, "I'd noticed that."

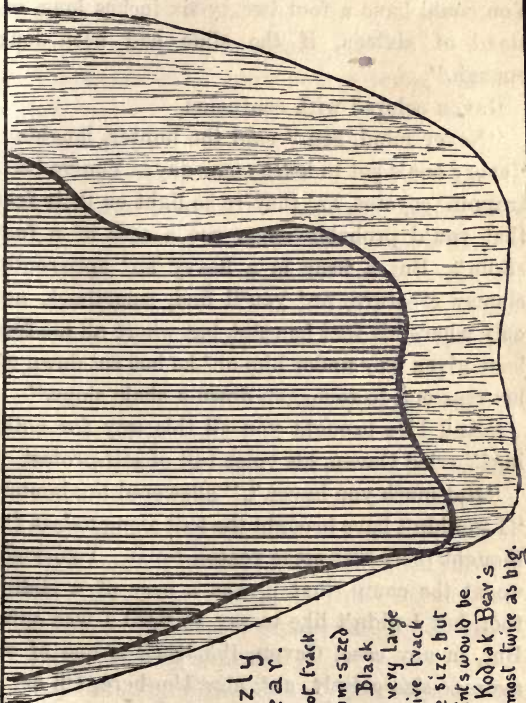
"Now," continued the hunter, "if you'll think for a minute, you'll see there couldn't be a bear with a track sixteen inches long an' only four or five inches wide. Bears don't walk on skis! If the track is four or five inches wide, it can't be more than nine or ten inches long."

"But this is!" declared Gavan, pointing at the track.

The hunter glanced at it casually.

"If you'll notice," he said, "the bear was goin' down-hill an' right here, the hill has a steep slope. When the bear put his foot on the soft earth thrown up out of a burrow, naturally it would slide. You've been measurin' from the place where the heel began to slide, to the place





between pages: 8 3/4.

Grizzly Bear.

Hind foot track of medium-sized animal. Black bear, if very large might give track of same size, but claw-prints would be shorter. Kodiak Bear's track almost twice as big.

where the toes were when the foot stopped slidin'. You could have a foot twenty-six inches long, instead of sixteen, if the slide had been long enough."

Gavan colored with confusion.

"Never mind, son," said the hunter, laughing, "every one's got to learn some day. You've been trappin' coyotes, an' they're so light on their feet that you'd probably never see a case of a foot slidin'. But a bear is a heavy an' apparently clumsy creature, an' you'll find, sometimes, not only where his foot has slid, but where all his feet have given way under him an' he has sat down on his rear end to toboggan down a shale slope."

"And I've brought you all this way for nothing!" cried Gavan, his voice full of self-protest.

"Not much you haven't," answered the hunter, "I wouldn't have brought the bait along unless I'd thought there was some reason for it. I guessed, up at the camp, that it was a case of a slidin' foot, but I didn't like to say so until I was sure. But, in any case, Gavan, the track is one of an average-size grizzly, an', now I'm here, I'll set a trap for him.

"Now, lad," he continued, "you've done a lot of trappin', although of a different character.

If I were to tell you to set a trap, where would you set it?"

The lad thought a moment.

"I don't think I'd know how to begin," he admitted.

"Why not?"

"Well, McLeod," the boy said, "I know how to set traps for coyotes, by using the 'smell telephone,' but bears haven't got the same habits. In any case, you're going to use bait. I suppose, like any trapping, the first thing to do is to find out where the bears travel and then set the trap in the least suspicious way."

"That's the main trouble, with bears, though," the hunter objected, "they don't travel regular trails. You see, Gavan, a wolf or a coyote hasn't got much to turn him off from his ordinary trail. He doesn't start huntin' until he gets the scent or the sight of his prey. He'll travel, maybe for miles, without ever gettin' a smell of anythin' which suggests food. A coyote, can, if necessary, go a week without a meal.

"It's different with a bear. He comes out of his winter-long sleep lookin' maybe almost as fat as when he lay down three months before. It isn't real fat, though, for in a week or two at the

most, all that fat disappears. I suppose the bear has really been absorbin' the nutritive value of the fat during his sleep, an' what remains is only empty cells. Anyway, a big bear will lose a hundred pounds in weight during the first two or three weeks after hibernation."

"Can't he eat enough to catch up?" queried the boy.

"So far as I can make out," the hunter replied, "after his several months' sleep, his stomach seems to be out of order. He can't digest a full meal. He'll start feedin' on grass-shoots, tender roots an' the like. He won't even eat ground squirrels or field-mice, for a few days. It's a mistake to suppose that the bear comes out of hibernation ravin' hungry an' seekin' what he may devour. A month later, maybe, but not at first.

"But, as I was sayin', a bear isn't like a wolf or coyote which can go a long time without a meal. A bear eats all the time, not because he's omnivorous, but rather, he's omnivorous because he has to eat all the time. That big carcass requires a lot o' food to keep it goin'. An', since his food is what he finds, rather than what he catches, nearly every time a bear crosses a mountain

range, he takes a different trail. What would be the use of turnin' over the stones he turned over before, when fifty feet to one side or the other he'd find a new lot, many o' them concealin' the juicy though small morsels which go to make a meal? That's what makes the bear such a persistent traveler, an' why he'll scramble up and down hills, over fallen timber an' through tangled underbrush, where other animals stick to regular trails."

"But they must follow some well-worn trails through the passes, and places like that," the boy suggested.

"Of course," the hunter answered. "As you know yourself, all these valleys narrow every once in a while to box canyons where there's only one trail."

"Then," said Gavan, his eyes brightening with a possible suggestion, "why not put the bear-trap right on one of these trails?"

The hunter laughed outright.

"You'd catch somethin' in such a trap," he said, "an' you'd catch it right away. But it would probably be a cow or a horse, likely. An' a bear-trap, weighing 42 pounds, designed to catch an' hold a grizzly, would break a cow's or a

horse's leg like you can snap the stem of a clay pipe between your fingers. The animal would have to be shot, an' you'd have to pay for it."

"Yes," agreed the boy thoughtfully, "I suppose you would. But if you can't set a trap in the trail, and if the bear doesn't travel by the same path, and if you can't lure him with a scent, what can you do?"

"That," said the hunter, "is where the trick o' bear-trappin' comes in. You have to cover a much wider range with bear-traps than for any other animal, because the bear rambles so much an' his habits are irregular an' various. Just as, in the case o' the coyote, you have to use caution not to let the man-smell get on your set; so, in the case of the bear, you have to work on another sense, his curiosity.

"Now a coyote is one of the sneakiest animals that walks. He's not as wise as the wolf, but he's a lot more timid. The bear is altogether different. Once in a while he's as timid as a coyote or he can be wise, as wise of a wolf, but generally he's just a hulkin' good-natured brute. He doesn't like man-smell, any more than any o' the wild creatures do, but he's a long way from bein' as scared of

it. He thinks he's quite able to take care of himself an' often enough, he's willin' to take a chance.

"Let's think a minute as to a bear's habits. First of all, he's a thirsty soul, an' rambles along near water. You're never half as likely to catch a bear in a valley with a dry creek as in one with runnin' water. If there are fish in the stream, so much the better, for Mr. Bear is a good fisherman. It's a sight to see, the way he'll crouch beside a stream an' when a fish comes into sight, scoop him out with a lightnin' stroke of his clawed paw. Your trap, then, should be set in a valley where there is a runnin' stream, but not necessarily near the water.

"Next, you want to remember that a bear, different from a coyote or a wolf, isn't always on the look-out for danger. He doesn't circle around a bush or shrub because of the fear that it will conceal an enemy. He's not afraid of two trees growing closely together. On the contrary, he's more apt than not to pass between them."

"Why?" asked Gavan.

"I don't know in the least," the hunter frankly admitted, "unless it may be he hopes there may be a rotten log on the other side of them an' a

meal of grubs to be found. That's about all I can figure out of it. Anyway, he nearly always does it."

"Then," suggested the boy, "I suppose one could put a trap between two trees."

"You could," the hunter agreed, "only you don't always find trees growin' exactly that way, or, if they do, they might be young trees which have no special attraction for the bear. He knows, even better than you do, the kinds of trees which are most likely to contain grubs. But, if you're lucky enough to find two trees like that in or near a trail which bears have to travel, for example, comin' out of a narrow canyon, that makes a good place to set.

"At the same time, Gavan, don't forget the question of cattle. Any twin trees which are wide enough apart for a bear to pass are wide enough for a yearlin' to pass, an' you don't want to catch a yearlin' in a bear-trap. But," and he tapped his saddle-horn lightly, "there's a way to stop that. A bear, even a big bear, will not stand more than three feet at the shoulders, a yearlin' will stand four feet, or higher. If, therefore, you fasten a pole across the openin' between the trees, about three feet six in height, a bear will go under



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

OUT FOR THEIR FIRST WALK.

Bear cubs are born in the winter, and generally their first experience of out-o'-doors is when snow still lies on the ground.

without noticin' it, but cattle will see the pole an' go round. That way, you can put a trap right in the middle of a cattle country, without bein' afraid of catchin' stock.

"Now," he continued, "I noticed as I came down, a tree set just that way, maybe a quarter of a mile away. I'll set this trap there. Maybe we'll catch Mr. Bear, maybe not. But you mustn't expect, Gavan, to catch as many bear as you do coyotes. If I get a couple in a month, I reckon I'm doin' well, while you want a couple of coyotes every night. That's the difference. Now I'll show you how I go to work to set my traps, though you've got to remember, Gavan, that no two bear-traps are exactly alike. The sets have got to vary with the country. A bear isn't so cautious, but, just the same, there's no use o' doin' anythin' to awake his suspicion.

"First of all," the hunter remarked, "if this trap is goin' to set between the trees, we've got to put the burro haunch on one side of it. We can't put the bait on the top of the trap, or the bear would come, pick up the bait an' walk away with it. Don't forget that the neck-muscles of a bear are strong enough to enable him to lift up an' carry off a well-grown calf, without the animal's

hoofs draggin' on the ground. So, we've either got to put the bait in the middle, between two traps—which is a very good set—or else block up one side, so that the bear can only approach the bait from the side in which the trap is hidden."

"Build a pen, then," suggested the boy, "and put the trap in the mouth. If a bear isn't suspicious, he'll walk right in."

"He might," the hunter agreed, "an' again, he mightn't. Makin' a pen of stakes driven into the ground means that every single stake would have the smell of new-cut wood an' the smell of the steel of the ax, as well as the handlin' of each stake. It's all right to set a trap in an old pen or abandoned corral that the bear is used to. But I think I can show you even a better plan than that."

He dismounted and turned his horse loose to graze, Gavan following.

"Here are my two trees," he said. "Now the first thing to be done is to make sure that cattle don't walk into the trap. There's a dead tree lyin' over there, Gavan. Fetch it here."

"No," he called, as the boy came nearer, "carry it if you can, don't drag it!"

The tree, probably seven inches at the butt, was

fairly heavy, but the boy staggered along with it.

"Now," said the hunter, "we'll put the butt on the ground an' slide the tree itself between the two big trees, pinchin' it tight. You can put a stone against the butt an' there you've got a natural obstacle which will keep any cow from tryin' to go through, an' at the same time won't arouse a bear's suspicions. Fallen trees, caught in other trees, are a part of his daily experience.

"Next," he continued, "on the lower side of the trees we'll roll a big stone, not so as to close the openin', but to keep the bear from walkin' toward the bait that way. If he comes down-stream, which is the most likely, he'll see an' smell the bait from the proper side, but if he comes up-stream, he isn't likely to get a whiff of it until after he has passed the trees. Then, if he goes back to get at the meat, he'll put one of his fore-paws in the trap, an' bang! we'll have him.

"Of course," he added, as he dug a hole in the ground and hid the trap in the same manner that Gavan did the traps for coyotes, "the bait has got to be staked down good and hard, lest the coyotes should carry it away."

"I was just thinking about that," said Gavan. "What will happen if a coyote steps on the trap?"

"Nothin'," answered the hunter, "no more than when a rabbit runs over your coyote trap, or a bird lands on it. These bear-traps, weighing 42 pounds, have got to have a weight o' three hundred pounds to spring them. Maybe, if by chance a full-sized timber wolf happened to step right on the pan, the trap would go off, but nothin' smaller would do it. An' a timber-wolf is as much worth catchin' as a bear. Besides, if the bait is staked down hard, before the bear can succeed in pullin' up the stake, he will be forced to dig an' stamp round a bit, just gettin' his feet in the trap. If it were not staked, Mr. Bear might simply come along, stretch out a long neck an' reachin' forward grab an' haul away the meat without puttin' his feet in the spot so nicely fixed up for him."

This work had taken some time, and the morning was wearing along before it was completed.

"Before we start to catch a mess of fish for lunch," the hunter then said, "we might as well visit the other bear-trap that I have in this gully. I haven't caught anythin' in the set for over two months, but you never can tell. It ought to be a good set. Some bear or other had killed a horse there, durin' the winter, an' though there's nothin' left but the bones an' a few shreds of hide, I've

noticed that there's fresh sign along the gully every few weeks or so."

The two rode along quietly, when suddenly a faint sound was heard, not much louder than the creaking of one tree against another, but the hunter's horse, a mettlesome brute, a bigger animal than the cow-ponies of the neighborhood, reared and tried to bolt.

"Bear!" said the hunter. "We've got him. Got a halter on your horse?"

"Yes," said Gavan.

"Tie him," said the hunter, dismounting, "an' tie him right. There's nothin' that a horse is so much afraid of as a bear. Your gun loaded?"

"Sure!" answered Gavan.

"Take it," said McLeod. "It doesn't pay to take any chances with a bear."

"But you're leaving yours," protested the boy.

The hunter partly pulled out his six-shooter.

"This is a Luger," he said, "with foreign ammunition, and while I don't know that it's any more powerful or accurate than a Colt or any other American-made gun, I know that it will break a bear's neck, if shot right. I'll tackle anything with that in my 'chapps' pocket. Are you ready? Come along."

With every sense alert, Gavan followed the hunter.

"The trap was set back there a ways," the hunter said, "but Mr. Bear has been tryin' to get away."

"How can he?" asked the boy, "don't you stake the trap?"

"No, siree!" the hunter answered, "I don't even try. Didn't you notice? The chain of the trap is fastened to a log, which acts as a clog. He can drag it, but not fast."

An angry roar rolled up the creek valley.

"Black bear, I should reckon," remarked the hunter, staring down at the faintly distinguishable tracks, "but a good-sized one."

"We ought to see him pretty soon," said Gavan, excitement surging through him and his voice singing in his ears as though it came from far away.

Then, so close that the echoes of it trembled in the ears with the vibration like thunder, the trapped bear, as yet unseen, cried his resentment and distressed alarm. The cry broke from his throat hoarsely and menacingly, a bestial threatening of fury yet, at the end of it, was a small

almost-human whimper, a little tremolo of fear, perhaps, or at least of uncertainty.

Breasting their way through the dense shield of juniper and gray live-oak thickets, Gavan and the hunter had come so close now that they could hear the long sobbing breaths of the bear as he wrestled with that devilment of steel on his paw, that mechanism of evil, which had no life in itself and yet clung so fast and pained so desperately. Again a clang resounded through the forest as he struck the trap against a tree, even as a man with a toothache grinds his teeth although it intensifies the pain.

A coughing growl broke from the yet hidden creature, and in the stillness that followed, Gavan heard the bear's fangs go crunching in a shocking rage against the hardened metal.

Once more he bawled, then crashing through the shrubs he came full into view.

A big black bear, menacing in his proportions, he lurched out into the open. Even in his agony, he could not escape the ungainly human-like character which has ever made a black bear the mountebank of the woods. There was an infinite pathos in his clown-like movements, the more so

that one felt that they were terrible. Blood streaked his slavering jaws where he had bitten the trap and his little eyes, set deeply like a pig's, glittered with alarm and anger.

He saw the two men, shortsighted though he was, and, too full of suffering to be wary, lunged forward.

As he heaved his great shoulder forward, limping, the clog, dragging on its chain, clinched against the roots of a scrub-oak and halted him with a jerk. The bones of his foreleg, crushed by the pressure of the 42-pound trap, must have burned like fire and this wrench tore at his nerve. Still, heeding more his anger than his pain, he lurched forward only to be dragged back again as the pliant but tough scrub-oak yanked back on his broken wrist. In rage he struck at it and stretched out his foreleg, but the clog was fast on the tree.

The roar turned to a whimper, like a child who has been punished for what fault it knows not, then, clown-like, the hulking shape sat down on the ground, like a man, and tried to break the trap free.

But the strength of it, or his own keen agony, was too much. Turning his back on his two foes,

he limped on three legs to the tree, freed the clog, and then, like a fiend in his passion, stood up, hugging the trap to his breast, and struck against a great cottonwood tree that stood near by, bere-sark in his rage.

Under these strokes, the bark flew like bullets and every blow scored through to the wood beneath. But this sudden flight of passion ended as swiftly as it came; he dropped back and whimpering anew, mawed over the griping steel.

Poor creature, all his craft, all his wit, all his cunning had come to this! His marvellous strength, sufficient to have torn limb from limb the two human beings who stood staring at him, was made of naught by this piece of steel; his tremendous vitality, able to range the wildest mountains in the fiercest weather, was sapped by that iron clutch.

Poor creature, the fault was not his. No cattle-killing grizzly this, but a rumbling big black bear, who perhaps, but not surely, might once or twice, in his life have dined on lamb or veal, yet who had stumbled into the fate made for his biggers if not his betters. There were tears in the boy's eyes as he watched the clown of the woods in his agony.

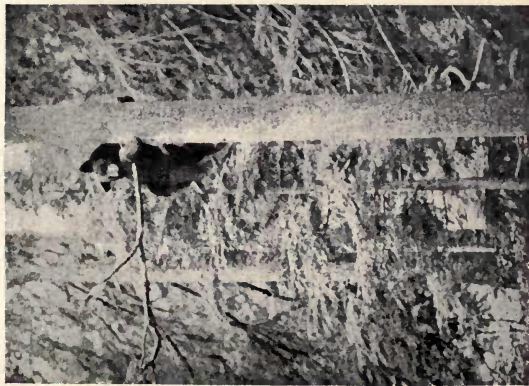
“Do you want to shoot him?” asked the hunter, willing to give Gavan the pride of killing a bear.

But the boy shook his head and turned away.

“You shoot,” he said, “I didn’t trap the poor beggar.”

A revolver shot, just one, rang out in the woods. There was a coughing growl, a clank of steel as the trap fell for the last time.

The clown of the woods was dead.



Courtesy of "Recreation."

THE BEAR THAT CLIMBS LIKE A MAN.
Black bears are entirely harmless. There is no case known of an unprovoked attack on man by a black bear.



Courtesy of "Field and Stream."

ANY BEAR UP A TREE IS A BLACK BEAR.
Neither Polar, Kodiak, nor Grizzly bears climb trees. (The cinnamon bear is only a color phase of the black bear.)

CHAPTER IX

A FIGHT WITH FIVE GRIZZLIES

“WE mightn’t have got off that easy,” remarked the hunter, a minute or two later, as he stood over the prostrate carcass and commenced to give his skinning knife an extra sharpening on the whetstone that he always carried, “if that had been a grizzly. I’ve seen grizzlies, even with a trap on one foot, rise on their hind-legs, clasp the heavy clog to their chest like a woman does a child an’ make a rush.”

“But would they be dangerous, all crippled that way?” asked the boy.

“Dangerous enough. A beast that can lift with his jaws a steer weighin’ 800 pounds an’ drag it away isn’t put out of business because he’s got a trap on his foot. It only makes him madder. It keeps him from runnin’ fast, that’s all, an’ if you’re spry enough an’ your guns are workin’ all right, you can best him, every time. But even when trapped they put up an ugly scrap.”

“Did you ever have a scrap with a grizzly?” Gavan asked.

The hunter shook his head.

“There’s no need for me to,” he said. “I’m not huntin’ grizzlies for sport an’ thrillin’ with excitement an’ the danger. Bear-huntin’ an’ trappin’ is my business. I make my livin’ at it. I suppose you’d call me a professional. I don’t trap, unless I’m pretty sure of a catch, an’ I don’t shoot unless I’m sure of a kill. Nearly all these stories of hand-to-hand encounters with grizzlies are due to one thing—a shot that has wounded an’ not killed.

“Any kind of game that’s dangerous should only be hunted with the best weapons—as you remember, Gavan, Blue Joe Keary was killed, not because he was a poor shot, but because his gun exploded. An’, besides that, huntin’ dangerous big game needs caution more than anythin’ else. If I had a piece of advice to give to a young sportsman, it would be:

“ ‘Never shoot unless you’ve got the weapon to be sure to kill with, an’ are near enough an’ skilful enough to be sure of a killin’ aim.’

“One of the liveliest grizzly fights I personally know about happened to my side-partner, ‘Uncle

Ned Clark' 'n Wyoming. He an' another fellow, half a city man, half ranchman, got mixed up with five grizzlies at the same time."

"How did they come out?"

"They came out all right," said the hunter, continuing to skin the trapped bear as he narrated. "I'll tell it to you, as near as I can, in the words of the ranchman, who wrote up the story in a magazine an' sent me a copy. I've read an' told the yarn so often that I know it pretty well by heart for, although I've been huntin' bears all my life, as I said to you, I've had very few wild experiences.

"This is the yarn:¹

" 'My first savings in life,' wrote this chap, Elmer Frank, 'were invested in the 7HL horse ranch, located in the heart of the mountains of Wyoming, my brand numbering about 800 head. This was my outfitting point and thither would I

¹ Mr. Caspar Whitney, one-time editor of *Outing* and a sportsman himself of world-wide eminence, secured complete corroboration of this story from two other members of the party, one of them being Judge H. J. David, a United States judge. The other member of the party dressed the wounds of the injured men, found and skinned the grizzlies and went over every foot of the scene of the extraordinary combat. The story is regarded by bear-hunters as one of the most unusual authentic accounts on record.

fly at the earliest approach of Indian summer, that indescribably dreamy, restful season, only experienced in its full glory along the base of the main range of the Rockies.

“ ‘On the occasion to which this narrative refers, I was accompanied by six guests, to wit, a United States Judge, an army captain, two Omaha lawyers, an ex-sheriff of Missouri, a British capitalist, an’ to me, most important of all, a full-fledged Texas cowboy, without whose brave and timely assistance this story would never have been penned.

“ ‘His name is Clark, Ed Clark, “Uncle Ned” the punchers call him, which would indicate age. As he was not forty, this was one of these unaccountable misnomers peculiar to the far West. He is far from handsome, resembling in form one of his own, gnarled, timber-line scrub cedars, rather than the slender growth of the lower altitude pine. His wicked little eyes are black and piercing and when animated, rival the rattlesnake’s in their scintillations of venomousness. Yet, when, crawling from under a dying bear, bruised, wounded and faint from loss of blood, I saw that rugged face through the willows not ten yards away, hail-

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ing me with words of cheer, it had a halo surrounding it.

“ ‘It was a battle royal, covering a period of about twenty minutes, the details of which, as I saw them, will ever remain indelibly stamped on my memory.

“ ‘Five grizzly bears, weighing not less than 600 pounds each, threw down the gage of battle.¹ The issue was promptly accepted, from necessity, as there was no escape, and the fight was on.

“ ‘Our camp was pitched in Halleck Canyon, at the headwaters of several streams flowing in different directions, through a broken and mountainous country. Game was in abundance and our party had bagged its quota of elk, deer, antelope, and mountain sheep. No bears had been sighted as yet, though at our nightly campfire comparisons of the day’s events, each party had wonderful tales to relate of encountering innumerable trails, fresh beds, mutilated carcasses of game and other bear sign indicating that they were banded together in bunches ranging as high as thirteen.’ ”

“ ‘Thirteen!’ ” interrupted Gavan in surprise.

¹ The author feels that Mr. Frank’s statement here is a trifle misleading. As the story itself shows, the fight was forced on the bears. They made no attack until fired on.

"Isn't that a large number for a sloth of bears?"

"It certainly is," the hunter answered, "six is as many as I ever saw together. Maybe the tracks looked like a lot more. That happens.

"Anyway, that particular morning, all the party except Clark an' Frank made an early start to try an' trail the big sloth of bears whose tracks had been seen crossin' a mountain meadow. Frank was not feelin' well and Clark stayed to keep him company. He goes on to tell the story:

" 'About three o'clock Clark proposed that we ride out and kill a mess of blue grouse for our companions, who would come home hungry after a long chase, and we might prepare a smothered feast for them against their homecoming. We thereupon saddled our horses and proceeded about two miles to the canyon of a little creek, where a small lake had been formed by fallen rocks turning the current of the stream.

" 'Here we came upon hot bear sign.

" 'After a hurried examination, Clark exclaimed:

" ' "They are here on this creek—the tracks are fresh—we flushed 'em when we rode up, an' we're goin' to make a killin' sure."

“ ‘Here it is necessary to state,’ Frank’s story states,” the hunter continued, “ ‘that the horse I rode on that day was a natty powerfully-built cow-horse, swift as an antelope and mettlesome as a Kentucky racer. He was the pick of eight hundred, and when he scented the bears, he began to grow troublesome. However, I forced him up the creek towards a patch of willows, about seventy-five feet in width, the direction which the bears had taken, Clark leading the way.

“ ‘These mountain willows grow in bunches, their branches spreading and interlacing at the tops, thereby making an almost impenetrable thicket.

“ ‘Here our quarry evidently had retreated, and a royal stronghold it was. On the opposite side a perpendicular cliff arose, several hundred feet in height, with a ledge about six feet in width paralleling it and peering about three feet above the top of the willows. On our side of the creek, the canyon broadened into a sage-brush flat of about two hundred yards in width and abutted against the willows, forming an almost perpendicular embankment about twelve feet in height.

“ ‘We were forcing our horses up onto this flat,

despite their bucking with distended nostrils at the smell of the bears, when Clark excitedly exclaimed:

“ “ “And, by thunder, there they are!”

“ “The bush seemed to be alive with them as they growled and leaped about and one big fellow stood on his hind legs, with his head and breast towering above the top of the willows, deliberately surveying us, and hailing us with inquisitive grunts.’ ”

Here the hunter broke off. He had finished the skinning of the black bear that had been caught in the trap and the energies of both he and Gavan were needed to lift the heavy bearskin and fasten it on the saddle of the hunter's pony, the horse dancing around like one possessed, at the proximity of the bear smell. Large chunks were cut off from the hams—for bear-meat is the finest kind of eating—and the tongue was removed as a delicacy. The skull was disarticulated and partly cleaned, afterwards being staked to the ground near an ant-hill for the little creatures to finish the work of cleaning the skeleton. The meat, wrapped in a sack to keep from being blown by the flies, was packed on Gavan's saddle, and the homeward ride to camp was begun.

"You were saying," said Gavan, as soon as the narrow canyon was passed and the trail ran through a small flat where two ponies could ride abreast, "that Frank had just seen the bears, and that an old chap was standing on his hind legs sizing up the party."

"Sure," said the hunter, "I'll go on."

"Clark's horse was a gentle old pack animal, and he had no trouble in quickly dismounting and withdrawing his Winchester from its saddle sling. He took deliberate aim and fired, Old Bruin dropping dead in his tracks."

"It certainly wasn't the bears who started the trouble, then," the boy remarked. "All the old fellow had done was to look at the two hunters."

"Sure," agreed McLeod, "Clark and Frank were looking for trouble. An' they found it—in bunches!

"During this short period,' Frank's story goes on, 'I had succeeded in dismounting and was fighting my horse in a vain endeavor to get my Winchester, in turn, from its saddle sling. The horse reared, plunged and kicked viciously, but I held his bit with one hand and the gun with the other until Clark fired his rifle. Then the confounded beast gave a mighty leap into space,

broke my hold, sent me rolling into the sage-brush and ran off with my gun.'

"Now," remarked McLeod, "a cautious man, havin' no gun, would have made off at once to catch his horse. There's no kind of use stayin' around bears without a gun, an' no man livin' can protect two people with one rifle. The huntin' fever had got into Frank's head, I guess, for he goes on to say:

" 'When I regained my feet, the commotion was still going on in the brush and another bear got on a rock and stood erect. Clark began to get a little excited and exclaimed,

" ' 'The woods is full of 'em! Look at 'em!'

" 'I told him to keep his head and blaze away, which he did, wounding this fellow, who dropped off his perch and began to bawl and kick up a great row generally.

" 'Immediately three other bears stood on their hind-legs, and the wounded one, regaining his feet, they came for us with growls of rage.

" 'This was too much for me, being armed only with a knife and the bears not ten jumps away.' "

"Pretty late to think about moving!" commented Gavan, as he fell behind at the narrowing

of the trail, waiting anxiously until the creek valley should open again and give him the chance of hearing the rest of the story, which was resumed as soon as the trail widened.

“ ‘I told Clark,’ Frank’s story continues, ‘that I was going to quit him and rustle my gun, which I proceeded to do. As soon as I turned tail, I ran for the horses, by this time about a hundred and fifty yards away. Fortunately, the reins of my horse had gotten entangled in the sage brush, thus securely holding him.

“ ‘As I ran for dear life, I heard the sage brush cracking behind me, but no more shots. I did not dare look around, as I expected Clark was down, and was mortally afraid that a bear would grab me at every jump, so was intensely relieved when he chirped, close at my back,

“ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘They made it too hot for me—my cartridges ran out—I had to quit ’em.’ ”

“ ‘Although he had plenty in his belt, his gun was empty and he was too closely pressed to reload.

“ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘I scrambled up the embankment and he followed me closely. Thinking discretion the better part of valor, he had not halted after firing the

second shot, hence neither of us knew whether, at this first charge, the bears reached the edge of the embankment on which we stood.

“ ‘We hastily secured our horses, and I removed my gun from the saddle-sling, making sure that it was loaded. Clark also reloaded and we returned to the field to redeem ourselves from the stigma of so hasty and undignified a flight.’

“ ‘You see, Gavan,’ McLeod continued, “even after bein’ wounded, the bears made only one charge, an’ when the men cleared out, they were ready enough to let ’em alone. Nothing very quarrelsome about those grizzlies, eh?’”

“ ‘I should say not,’ the boy answered, “I should have thought that wounded one, anyway, would have kept after the men. He’d have got them, too, if he had, before they could have got their guns out and reloaded.”

“ ‘You’ll see why the bear didn’t,’ McLeod continued, and went on:

“ ‘We rode up and down the willow patch, halloosed and threw rocks into it, but no sign of life gave answer.

“ ‘Thinking, of course, that the bears had taken flight up the canyon, for they had to go either up

or down to get away, we followed the creek up towards the extreme timber line, beating the brush and exploring every possible hiding place.

“ ‘A hasty examination failed to disclose any trail in that direction and we at once returned to our battleground, about three miles down the creek, feeling sure that we would rout them out below that point.

“ ‘On our arrival there, we dismounted, went into the bush, dressed the dead bear and dragged him out with our lariats attached to the horns of our saddles.

“ ‘As before stated, the willows grew in bunches and interlaced at the tops and I was compelled to walk in a crouching position and at times to crawl on my hands and knees. I could not see ten feet ahead of me and was thereby greatly handicapped.

“ ‘I had not proceeded twenty yards from the point where Clark had left me when I was greeted with a terrible growling and the crackling rush of a heavy body.

“ ‘I fired and was embraced, it seemed to me, almost simultaneously.

“ ‘The bear’s mouth was wide open and he towered ’way above me. I distinctly remember

that, and instinctively ducked my head, knowing that it would be crushed like an eggshell if exposed.

“ ‘For this reason, when we came together, I found my head upon his shoulder and immediately clinched him around the body, holding on for dear life and calling to Clark as I went down under him.

“ ‘Of course, I had no idea of time, when in that position, but Clark estimates it to have been five or six minutes before he reached me and fired.

“ ‘He said he responded to my call immediately and was guided to the spot by the racket that the old bear was making. He had to move slowly and cautiously for the thicket was full of bears and he knew that if he got mixed up with one himself, he would have no opportunity of coming to me.

“ ‘He was at a point only fifteen feet away when he caught the first glimpse of us.

“ ‘He crouched down and waited some time for the bear to expose a fatal spot at such an angle that he could dare to fire without the chance of hitting me.

“ ‘He saw that I was alive and staying with him.

“ ‘He could not shoot him in the heart, for my head was there, nor could he see Bruin’s head, and

he dared not move further for fear of attracting the attention of the other bears and bringing them down upon him.

“ ‘Becoming desperate, unable longer to stand the suspense and the bear’s back now being turned to him, Clark took deliberate aim and fired, the bullet entering the bear’s hip, plowing its way just outside the ribs and lodging in the neck.

“ ‘There was a terrific crashing of brush, growling and bawling echoed all around me. Which-ever way I looked, I could see bears either rising on their hind-legs to look or rushing to and fro.

“ ‘My bear would rise up with me, shake me like a rat and chuck me down again, threatening to loosen every joint in my body, but I realized that my only hope was to hold on. Suddenly I felt his teeth tearing at my hip, the only spot of my anatomy he could reach with his mouth, and he literally tore my trousers and part of my heavy calf-skin shapps from me. Had it not been for the latter, he would have made short work of my leg, then and there.

“ ‘I was in desperate straits and had almost given up, thinking that Clark had deserted me.

“ ‘Then the thought of my knife in a scabbard at my left side spun into my mind like a dream. I

let go my right grip, worked my hand between the grizzly's harsh fur and my body, and reached my knife.

“ ‘To my horror I found it was tied to the scabbard with a buckskin string, which I used to keep the knife from jumping out of the scabbard when I was in the saddle. I tried hard to untie or break it, but Old Bruin did not see it that way.

“ ‘He let go my hip and seized my hand, crunching through and through it. I never expected to see my hand again.

“ ‘In my dire distress, I thought nothing of it at the time. It was only one hand! Did I not have another one still left me? I was just loosening my grip of the bear with it.

“ ‘Just at that second, to my indescribable joy, I heard the sharp report of a Winchester, not twenty feet away.

“ ‘It was Clark.

“ ‘I quickly struggled to my feet,¹ seized my gun and turned just in time to see poor Clark go down under the now doubly enraged and wounded bear.

¹ It would appear from this that the bear released Frank immediately upon receiving Clark's shot, although the writer of the narrative does not definitely say so.

“ ‘It struck wickedly at him with its paw, hitting the gun and sending it spinning in the air.

“ ‘True to hunters’ tradition, Clark played ‘possum in an admirable manner. He saw me get on my feet, so he said afterwards, and thought I would kill the bear before it hurt him very badly, hence he lay perfectly still. But in this he was doomed to disappointment. My gun was full of sand and refused to work. I threw down the lever and began working the sand out of it as rapidly as possible.

“ ‘I saw my task was useless, the magazine refused to give up its cartridges.

“ ‘It was an awful moment of suspense.

“ ‘I forgot myself in the quiet valor of poor Clark.

“ ‘One wrench on the lever and it sprang back into place, but no cartridge came with it.

“ ‘I could only work with my left hand, and the third finger of my right,’—and it must have been torture to move that mashed hand,” the hunter commented—“ ‘but I quickly snatched a cartridge from my belt and was thrusting it into the barrel when another bear leaped on me from Sam knows where! I’m sure I don’t.

“ ‘I went down in a heap under the crushing weight, and poor Clark’s heart almost stopped beating when he heard me call:

“ ‘ ‘ ‘Here comes another one! I can’t help you now! He’s got me again!’”

“ ‘I don’t believe this bear hurt me at all, unless it was my left arm, which had several teeth-holes in it and was pinched until it was black from wrist to shoulder the next morning, but I have no recollection of when it was done.

“ ‘This bear had evidently been wounded by one of our shots, for he tore at the ground and chewed at the willows, all the time he was over me, almost burying me in dirt and broken sticks.

“ ‘Presently there was another roar and a crash and Tophet broke loose again, which evidently attracted my bear, as he left me suddenly as he had attacked.

“ ‘I was nearly used up, but I had enough strength left to regain a sitting position and get hold of my gun once more, when Clark’s bear, seeing me move, left him and came for me.

“ ‘I verily believe I made the last effort I was capable of at the time, and just as he was coming down on me, I poked my Winchester blindly at him and pulled the trigger.

“ ‘He fell dead with his head on my chest, knocking the breath out of me and I lapsed into unconsciousness. My nap must have been a short one, for I was awakened by Clark calling out:

“ ‘ ‘Stay with ’em, Frank. You hit that one, I saw him fall. Give him another.’ ”

“ ‘I opened my eyes, looking into those of the dead bear on top of me. He didn’t look a bit dead, and it was a few moments before I could persuade myself to make an effort to move, and when I did so, it was as gingerly as one would walk on eggs, fearing he would suddenly awaken and make up for lost time.

“ ‘With considerable pain and labor, however, I succeeded in extricating myself, and, bareheaded, barelegged, with blood and sand smeared and plastered over me from head to foot, torn, bleeding, and sore, I dragged myself toward Clark, who had retreated to and mounted the stone ledge on the outer side of the brush.

“ ‘I had nearly reached him.

“ ‘He was standing on the ledge waiting to help me up. As I came nearer he asked me if I was much hurt. I told him I felt as though I were chewed to a sausage, but that I was indebted to him for my assistance.

“ ‘Just at this moment, the remaining three bears came on another furious charge.

“ ‘We fought them off three or four times, blazing away as they would leap over the brush towards us, before I succeeded in reaching the ledge. The smoke of our guns seemed to bewilder them, for, after a volley, they would jump up into it, bite and smack at it with their paws, and then retreat to their den, which, we then discovered, was within a few feet of the place where they had me in chancery.

“ ‘After the last charge they seemed content to lie quiet, so Clark walked up the ledge about fifteen yards to try to peer into the den. He called to me that he could see the entrance, and to look out as he would throw a stone into it. As he threw, I fired.

“ ‘We were answered by a howl and two bears came straight at me.

“ ‘Two lucky shots from my rifle finished them, and they died in each other’s arms at my feet near the foot of the ledge.

“ ‘Clark was wild with delight. He was sure that there was only one more and that one badly wounded, as he was making the canyon ring and echo to his wails of pain, so he washed my

wounds, tearing our handkerchiefs and shirts into bandages to do the best piece of dressing possible under the circumstances.

“ ‘We then deliberately sat down, for the first time since the battle began, and discussed how we should dispose of the remaining bear, who was still as noisy as ever. Clark proposed to set fire to the bush and burn him out, but it would not do thus to destroy our precious pelts, and beside, my only hat and the only one procurable within a hundred miles—was under one of the bears.

“ ‘Dusk was on us, and we must act quickly, whereupon we determined to assault the den.

“ ‘We arrived within twenty or thirty feet of our quarry, when a gust of wind blowing down the canyon parted the willows and disclosed the old fellow lying on his stomach with his head on his forepaws, as if resting. I sent a bullet quickly to his heart and quieted him forever.

“ ‘It was now almost dark and after dressing our game, we struck out for camp which we reached about nine o’clock.

“ ‘In all the encounter, Clark was fortunate enough not to receive a scratch, and this fact should be explained, if susceptible of explanation. Old hunters say that a badly wounded grizzly will

seize and hold on to the first object within reach and expend its remaining strength in a desperate endeavor to rend it to atoms. I have seen this fact verified in at least half a dozen instances.

“ ‘In this case, when the bear, on being wounded from the rear, sprang off me in its leap for Clark, it grabbed a mouthful of willows and was crunching at them while over him, he meanwhile quietly playing ’possum. This might explain why the second bear did not make mincemeat of me, as both of them died with their mouths full of brush.’ ”

The latter part of the story had been broken by frequent interruptions, as the trail narrowed or became too rough for the two ponies to ride abreast, and had been finished by the hunter after Gavan and he had arrived at camp.

“I can show you,” said the hunter, stopping for a moment the cooking of supper which had already been begun, “the letter sent by Judge David backing up the story.”

He disappeared into his small tent and appeared again with a small magazine-clipping which he read out loud:

“I believe it was in the fall of ’89,” the letter ran, “when our party was in Wyoming. I re-

member very distinctly that all of the party except Clark and Frank were out hunting during the day, and, returning in the evening, we were told that Frank and Clark had gone out late in the afternoon after grouse.

"It was twilight when Estabrook (another of the members of the party, who also wrote corroborating the story) and I, who were bathing in the stream a short distance from the camp, were disturbed by the crazy shouts of Clark and Frank returning to camp. They were the most victory-intoxicated men I ever saw, notwithstanding that Frank was scratched and bitten in several places, though not seriously.

"We hastened to the camp, and the party gathered and was told the story of the fight with the five grizzlies, as Frank has written it. As I remember, Frank was bitten in one hand, in the arm, and in the buttock. We treated the wounds in the best way we could and were somewhat afraid of blood-poisoning. You may be assured that we got very little sleep that night and were out early in the morning.

"We found the five grizzlies, which had been cut open and eviscerated by Clark and Frank before they returned to camp. We all pitched in and skinned the five bears. I should say that they were four or five years old.

"Of course we went through the bushes and had the story repeated over and over to us. The condition of the bushes and the earth was evidence enough of a desperate contest, if any one had for a moment doubted the story.

"You are at liberty to use this letter in any proper way you choose."

The hunter folded up the clipping and returned it to its place in the little raw-hide box which held his main treasures in camp.

“You see, Gavan,” he said, returning, “there is a real grizzly story. But it’s all wrong to bring that forward as an example of an attack by grizzlies. In the first place, Clark fired, merely on seein’ the big bear. In the second place, even after knowin’ that there was a wounded grizzly in the thicket, Frank crept among the bushes, as he says himself, where it was so thick that he couldn’t see ten feet in advance. That’s not exactly courage, that’s foolhardiness. The only wonder is that he got off so easily.

“On the other hand, Clark’s advance through the bushes was sheer courage. He was comin’ to the rescue of his friend. I asked him, when he told me the story, why he had shot at the rear of the bear. He said he was afraid that Frank’s strength could not hold out much longer an’ he thought that the bear might be maulin’ him badly. But Frank’s grit, in gettin’ his gun, an’ shootin’ with his right hand all chawed to pieces, was fine. I certainly never heard before of two men killin’ five bears in such a close struggle, nor of one man killin’ four of them when he



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

THE TWO-HUNDRETH CHRISTMAS RECEPTION.

The Hudson Bay Company factor is a chief connecting-link between the pioneer trapper and the trapper of to-day.

FIGHT WITH FIVE GRIZZLIES 285

was able to use only one finger of his right hand."

"But I always supposed," said the boy, "that any fight with a grizzly was likely to be that way. The stories in books always say so."

"Yes," said the hunter, "an', in a way, the books are right. But every one who has hunted big game in the Rockies will tell you that there's a big difference in temper an' ferocity between Old Ephraim of to-day, an' the grizzled old fellows of which Kit Carson an' the frontiersmen used to tell in the early days.

"When you stop to think of it, Gavan, it's small wonder that the grizzly used to be considered marvelously invulnerable an' tenacious of life. The bear-hunters of fifty years ago were armed with a long, single-barreled, small-bored pea rifle, in which the bullets ran seventy to the pound. A modern .32 caliber rifle carries only a slightly heavier ball than the rifles of the early bear-hunters, but there is no comparison as to its penetration an' killin' power. The old-time muzzle-loader was so crude an' uncertain of fire, that there is nothin' with which to compare it in these days of breech-loadin' repeaters, scientific ammunition, an' fine adjustment of missiles to the bore. One can understand, then, what grit it

must have taken to confront the biggest an' most savage of American wild beasts an' run so many chances of inflictin' a painful wound only, which would instantly transform a peaceful beast into a concentration of bestial fury an' vengeance.

"An' even modern ammunition will not always stop a grizzly. When wounded, he will face a battery of Gatling guns. The moment he feels pain, he becomes 'a horror in fur and claws,' as I heard a bear-hunter say once. It's a good phrase, too, for when a mad grizzly, at full height on his hind-legs, with his fore-paws extended, his great head swingin' from side to side, his big red mouth open and slaverin', comes straight at you with a speed not much short of a railroad train, it's either a very courageous man or one who hasn't any nerves at all, that's goin' to face his foe without a qualm.

"The vitality of a mature grizzly is almost beyond the belief of any one who has had no huntin' experience among them. There are several instances of grizzlies havin' traveled one or two hundred yards after havin' been shot through the heart. I suppose the best-known example of this was in Oregon, where Senator Edwards was chased for nearly a quarter of a mile over fallen

logs an' through dense chaparral by a bear whose heart, as it was afterwards found, had been pierced by no less than four rifle balls.

"No, my boy, it isn't wise to fool with a grizzly. Only a fool, or a man under compulsion, will go after a grizzly alone, an' any man, alone, who fires at a grizzly without knowin' exactly where he will go an' what he will do in case the shot doesn't prove fatal, is likely to sign his own death-warrant.

"Records of bear-hunters are full of surprises, but I think the most extraordinary happenin' I ever heard of, happened to my partner in Montana. He had shot a bear an' the creature had fallen apparently dead at the first shot. This chap, Tinden by name, Big Jack Tinden, came up cautiously enough, but the bear seemed dead. He laid down his rifle an' pulled out his pipe an' box of matches for a smoke before skinnin' the bear.

"At that second, the bear suddenly seemed to wake up an' made one lunge at Big Jack, who, bein' unable to jump back because of a big log behind him an' knowin' the danger of bein' thrown on his back with face an' stomach exposed to the beast's claws, dived forward on the

ground, under the bear, an' played 'possum. The bear didn't hurt him, but half crouched, half lay on him, growlin'. Jack had a Colt's in his belt, but he couldn't get at it. One hand still held the pipe, the other the box of matches.

"A brilliant idea struck him. He struck a match an' set fire to all the matches in the box, at the same moment throwin' the blazin' box behind him so that it fell just under the bear's face. With the wild animal's natural fear of fire, the grizzly leaped to one side, freein' Big Jack, who whirled round, drew his revolver an' pumped lead into the wounded creature so fast he never moved from his tracks. He was dead before the box of matches had ceased to burn.

"It's a great sport, bear-huntin', one that taxes the best that there is in a man, an' it's a good thing that the Government has a close season on bear, for it would be a pity to see the grizzly disappear entirely from the Rocky Mountains."

"But you trap them!" the boy declared.

"As I said to you once before," the hunter answered, "the Government isn't tryin' to trap all grizzlies. There are outlaw grizzlies in America, just as there are outlaw men. When a grizzly gets to cattle-killin' or becomes a marauder and

a robber, he's a criminal, an' as a criminal, he's got to be caught. Trappin' is an art, not a slaughter, an' the trapper must know not only how an' when to trap, but also understand the habits of his quarry. The United States is not tryin' to destroy wild animals, but to prevent criminality in the animal kingdom as well as in the human race."

CHAPTER X

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT

A FEW weeks after his return from the bear-hunter's camp, and while working on his alfalfa field, diverting the water from a branch of his irrigation ditch, so that it would spread uniformly over the land—for the summer had been very dry—Gavan saw his former enemy, Antonio, riding up the trail to his place.

The boy stiffened, but went forward to greet his neighbor, wondering what new trouble was in the wind. He had taken the pains to learn Spanish the winter before and whenever he got a chance, and, accordingly he was able to greet the newcomer in his own tongue.

"Good day," was the latter's reply; "very hot!"

"Yes," agreed the boy, wondering what was coming, "it is hot."

"Plenty of luck with traps?" queried the Mexican.

"Nothing to complain of," was the boy's an-

swer. "I got eleven coyotes last week."

The Mexican threw one leg over the horn of his saddle and commenced to roll a cigarette.

"You trap wild-cat?" he asked.

Gavan looked a little surprised, for he could not see where these inquiries led.

"Sometimes I find a bob-cat in one of my traps," he said, "not often, because I'm going after coyotes. What catches one won't catch the other."

"One time I catch plenty wild-cat," said the Mexican, "now, no more. Last week, ten chicken gone, last night six. My traps sprung."

The boy became interested.

"What's the matter with your traps?" he asked.

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

"Some one spring my traps every night," he said, with vindictive meaning.

Gavan's eyes narrowed. The last two years had not only broadened his shoulders, but steeled his character. He remembered the trouble he had suffered at this man's hands, when he was quite a boy, and he was not prepared to stand any more nonsense.

"You mean," he said, threateningly, "that you suspect me of springing them?"

The Mexican's gaze shifted.

"No, no," he said, lamely, "I do not say that. But," and he faced the boy again, "they are sprung every night. A wild cat will not do that."

"Go to the deuce," answered Gavan, shortly, "and take your dirty suspicions somewhere else."

The Mexican did not shift his ground.

"Last night, my traps sprung," he said. "Last night, you not at home."

"No," said the boy; "I went over to the pueblo."

"Two weeks ago my traps sprung," the Mexican continued, "and that night you not at home. What do you say?"

"I say that you're looking for trouble," the boy replied.

"Ten of us," said the Mexican, "have seen the traps sprung, and have seen that you were not at home. You not believe me? I swear by—" here he uttered a most sacred local reference—"that it is as I say."

Gavan sobered down somewhat. He knew enough of Mexican character to realize that if the colony came to believe that he, in a spirit of revenge, had sprung these traps, he would have the whole Mexican population against him. He had

taken pains, during the past two years, to conciliate his neighbors.

"You're sure," he said, thoughtfully, "that the traps have really been sprung."

The Mexican repeated his adjuration.

"You can see for yourself," he said.

Gavan leaned on the handle of his hoe and looked up at the seated figure.

"I believe you're telling the truth, Antonio," he said, "and I'll swear, if you like, that I never touched your traps. Oh, I know that isn't enough to satisfy you," he added, quickly, as the Mexican made a restless motion in his saddle, "but we can do something more than that.

"You say that something or some one has sprung your traps?"

"For sure!" Antonio answered.

"Then," said the boy, "that something or some one has left tracks. You know as well as I do that it is impossible to go along a trap line and not leave some trail. If on foot, there is the track of a shoe; if on horseback, the track of a horse. No two shoes just the same, no two horse's hoofs just the same. If you like, I'll go along with you and examine the ground. If there's any track to be found, it won't be mine. As I've told you, I

was at the pueblo last night. But we'll try to find out. Is that fair?"

"Good," said Antonio. "But you will find nothing. I look myself."

Gavan made no reply, but he thought to himself that Antonio's examination of a trail meant little. Years of painful training had taught him how really difficult it was to decipher the faint signs of a trail. He saddled his pony and rode with the Mexican to the slopes of the hills directly behind his irrigated land.

"Have you caught many bob-cats this winter and spring?" he asked.

"Twenty-four," Antonio replied.

Gavan opened his eyes in surprise. He had no idea that there were so many bob-cats in the mountains.

"You get good prices for the fur?" he continued.

"Plenty money in winter," was the answer, "little in spring. Nothing in summer. I keep traps, now, only to protect my chickens. Fur no good."

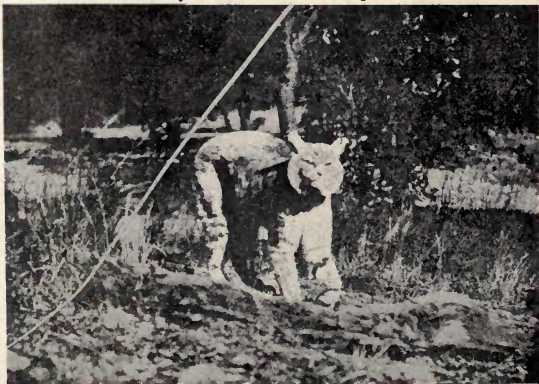
Conversation languished, as the trail narrowed. Nothing more was said until Antonio pulled up his pony.



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

PUSSY — BUT NOT DOMESTIC!

The bay lynx, or bob-cat; compare with the heavier build of the Canada or true lynx shown in the lower picture.



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

"DON'T GO TOO CLOSE!"

The trap was set for coyote, but it caught a lynx. There's always one fight more left in a lynx until he's dead.

"First trap," he said, pointing to the ground.

Gavan dismounted. He examined the ground around the trap carefully. There was not a sign of a human foot, and the only hoof-marks were those of a mule.

"There's no one been here," he said. "These tracks," and he pointed to the hoof-marks, "are of a mule, not a pony. Have you been riding your trap line on a mule?"

"Yes," the Mexican declared truthfully, and a little surprised, "I ride a mule."

"And without shoes?"

"Without shoes," the Mexican agreed.

"No other hoof-marks here," the boy said, "and no footmarks at all. But," he continued, "what's this?"

He pointed to a faint smudge on the ground.

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see anything," he declared.

"Well, I do," Gavan asserted. "It looks like a bear track, only it would have to be a pretty small bear."

The Mexican leaned over from his saddle and looked closely.

"Not a bear-track," he said. "Much too small."

"Might be a dwarf bear," said Gavan, thoughtfully, "although it's true I never heard of one. And any cub as small as that, wouldn't be far away from its mother. We ought to see the mother's track around here pretty soon."

"Yes," agreed the Mexican skeptically, "if it's the track of a cub. But I, me, I do not think it is a bear."

"Lead ahead," said the boy, piqued by this reply. "Let's see what we find at the next trap."

The Mexican made a mocking reply, to which Gavan paid no heed. He had another problem to settle. How could a bear cub, ignorant, as all bear cubs would be, of the ways of traps, travel alone along a trail, and spring a trap? One case might happen by accident, but not a second.

"Trap Two!" said the Mexican, stopping at the foot of a tree.

As before, Gavan dismounted and examined the ground carefully. As before, the hoof-marks of Antonio's mule were quite plain, but there were no footmarks to be seen. On the other hand, clear as print, was this smudged track resembling that of a bear cub, only it seemed rounder and lighter.

Gavan pointed to it without a word.

Antonio answered with a shrug. It did not need much knowledge of the habits of bears to see the mystery in these tracks.

The two rode on. Gavan examined the ground carefully, as he rode, but never once did he see a sign either of the queer bear cub, if it were a cub and not a dwarf bear or a deformed creature of some kind. Still less did he see any sign of the mother bear, though, more than once, dusty ground around a village of ground-squirrel burrows gave ample opportunity for a satisfactory footmark.

The third trap was even more definite. The tracks of the weird bear were not only scattered all around the trap, but, upon the steel, good-sized scratches on the steel showed where the trap had been seized and thrown to one side, after having been sprung.

"Ever see anything like that?" asked Gavan, holding out the trap.

The Mexican looked at it intently.

"Those marks are new," he declared, "they were not there when I set the trap."

"Well, you don't think I took it up in my teeth, do you?" queried the boy, in fine scorn. "Besides, what tracks are those?"

He pointed at the smudged dwarf bear tracks scattered around the ground. If the mark at the first trap had been indeterminate, that could not be said of the later two. The third, especially, was surrounded by claw marks. The dwarf or cub bear, or whatever kind of creature it was, had not only sprung the trap and eaten the bait, but had wantonly torn up the ground. There seemed a certain savageness expressed in the tracks altogether inconsistent with the character of a bear. Besides, the evidence was clear that the bait had not been abstracted by human hands, but that it had been eaten by an animal.

"You must be crazy, Antonio," said the boy, "to suppose that I came here in the middle of the night to take a dinner of live prairie dog, and to eat it, skin, insides and everything, leaving only a few bones and some bits of fur!"

The Mexican's ideas were shaken. He rolled the inevitable cigarette and only answered,

"Something or some one sprung the traps."

"Well, then," declared the boy, brusquely, "do you think I did that?" and he pointed to the ground.

The Mexican was no fool. In his heart he was convinced that Gavan had something to do with

it, but the evidence all pointed the other way. Although willing enough to suggest by innuendo that Gavan had been responsible for the dirty trick of springing the traps, he was not prepared to make his accusation to the boy himself.

"Yes, an animal did that for sure," the Mexican answered, "but what kind of animal? Dog, eh?"

This was a hint that Gavan's dogs had been mixed up in the affair, but Gavan only answered by pointing to the ground.

"Don't be a fool, Antonio," he said, roughly; "you know better than that. Those are not dog's tracks."

It was useless for the Mexican to suggest that they were. He shrugged his shoulders again.

"Look here," said the boy. "Let's bait and set those traps again. I'll guarantee to stay home for the next three nights. Then you can come again and find out if the traps are sprung. If a bear is doing it, he won't know anything about the plan, and will go on, and then you can be sure it isn't up to me. Of course, that would only prove something if the traps are sprung, but it's worth a trial. Do you agree?"

The Mexican nodded and the two rode back to

300 WITH THE U. S. TRAPPERS

Antonio's place, where he had a number of ground-squirrels in a pen, which he had caught by box traps, for live bait. Gavan took these and rode back along the Mexican's short trap line, resetting the traps and staking down the bait.

Three days later, by appointment, Antonio and Gavan met for a further investigation of the mystery. It was evident that the Mexican was skeptical, and Gavan had been aware that he had been closely spied on during the past three days. But, when they came to the wooded section, the boy's expectations were fulfilled.

Every trap was sprung.

"I never knew a bear to do that before," was Antonio's grudging admission of the boy's original declaration that the traps had been sprung by an animal.

"Nor did I," agreed Gavan, "and I tell you what, Antonio, it's up to us to get that bear. Judging from the size of the track he must be a small one. If you're willing, I'll take up two or three of my No. 4 traps—they ought to be big enough—and I'll set those along the line. Maybe he's been springing these traps by standing on them, and his foot is so big that it covers both jaws as well as the pan. You see, your No. 2

traps have only a spread of $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches, and even if a bear stepped on the pan and on one of the jaws, that would keep the spring from coming up and the trap would not be sprung until the bear's foot was lifted off it."

"That's not the way a bear acts," declared the Mexican, shaking his head, "but if you think you can catch him, go ahead."

Gavan perceived that the question was much graver than it appeared. He realized that unless he could definitely catch that queer bear, and solve the mystery of the tracks, he would be under suspicion from the Mexicans. Besides, his pride as a trapper was concerned.

The boy had set the line of traps with all the skill of which he was capable, and this dwarf bear, or whatever it was, had sprung them, one after the other, searching out each trap and taking the bait. The boy knew that bears possess a keen nose, but this trailing was not in the least suggestive of the habits of a bear, while as for going over the same ground night after night, it was still more difficult to assume such action to a bear, whether grizzly or black.

Gavan set the traps again, and, again, the next morning, found them all sprung. Tooth-marks on

springs and chains revealed the means used. The tracks, again, were unquestionably not those of a wolf or coyote, or any of the dog family; they were equally unquestionably not those of a bobcat or mountain lion or any of the cat family. It seemed incredible, but they looked as though made by a bear.

In this puzzle, Gavan sought the help of Quick Feather. He explained the circumstances in full to the old Indian, but when he suggested that the theft was done by a bear, Quick Feather shook his head.

"Not bear," he said, positively.

"What can it be, then?" demanded the boy.

"Go see," answered the Indian.

This fitted in entirely with Gavan's desires, so he waited impatiently until the Indian went out to the corral surrounding the pueblo, caught his horse, saddled it and rode out. The distance was not far to the traps, taking a short cut from the pueblo to the mountains.

Quick Feather's comment on the situation was brief and characteristic. At the very first trap they came to, he bent down and looked at the ground, once, twice, and then straightened up.

"Not bear," he said, "bad medicine!"

And vaulted on his pony.

"But if it's not a bear, what is it?" queried the boy.

"Bad medicine," the Indian replied, and not another word could Gavan get out of him. Like nearly all Indians, on being asked a question he did not intend to answer, he assumed deafness and rode on as though he were alone. Evidently Quick Feather was not going to be of any assistance in solving the problem.

So, a day or two later, Gavan rode out to McLeod and propounded the question to him. He showed him the tracks, of which he had made several careful drawings. But when he explained the circumstances and said that Antonio had made out of the issue a definite accusation against him, McLeod showed himself as unwilling to take part in the inquiry as Quick Feather had done.

"I'd sure like to help you out, Gavan," he said, "but I haven't got the right to. I'm on Government pay, an' while the Biological Survey gives me privileges to run into the nearest local town every once in a while, Taos or Glorieta or wherever, I can't stay away more than one night. My traps have got to be looked after, all of 'em, every

other day. I can't take Government time to try an' figure out your puzzle.

"Besides," he added, "in a way, it's a party fight, an' I can't get the Government in wrong with the Mexicans. If I were on my own, there's nothing I'd like better than to jump in an' show up the Greasers to a fare-you-well, for I think there's something crooked about it, but a Biological Survey man can't take sides. I'll tell you one thing, though, an' that is that those tracks o' yours look less like those of a bear than any I've ever seen.

"Are you dead sure you've drawn 'em right?" he continued. "Remember your sixteen-inch track—which was just a medium-sized bear goin' down hill?"

Gavan colored with confusion at the remembrance, but he stuck to his point just the same.

"I'm dead sure," he said positively, "I drew several to make sure and they were all exactly the same."

"Well," the hunter returned, "you seem to be dropped on for queer things. First shot out o' the box, you find a wolf track around the body of Blue Joe Keary which is an' isn't the track of a wolf, an' then you find the track of a bear, which is

an' isn't a bear's track, springin' traps all along the line. If you ask me, I should say that you were playin' around with spooks!"

Gavan laughed in answer, but the suggestion made him uncomfortable just the same. He had almost forgotten the mystery that surrounded his night of watching in Ghost Canyon, and he wondered if perhaps this was going to turn out a part of the same queer happening. In any event, it was clear that he was not going to receive any help from McLeod, any more than he had from Quick Feather.

As he rode back to his cabin, Gavan puzzled continuously over the problem. He knew that it was of no use taking his troubles to the ranch boss, for Thin-lip Jack would probably want to settle the matter by a threat to give Antonio a sound thrashing. This, as Gavan knew, would be far from settling the controversy, contrariwise, it would only be giving it a still uglier turn. Likewise, if the boy asked the sheriff about it, the latter could do nothing. He was an able man and a marvelous shot, but he knew nothing about traps and trapping and his advice would serve little purpose. Also, the sheriff was wary about actions which exceeded his official duties.

If his men friends couldn't help him, how about the dogs? They, at least, Gavan thought, had no prior reason to be puzzled, they would not be troubled by the thought that it was "bad medicine" nor would they be concerned as to the Mexican side of the controversy. It was immaterial to an Airedale whether a track were in accordance with custom or not.

That night Gavan set the traps again.

Early next morning, before the dew was off the ground and while the scent of a trail would lie heavily, Gavan reached the line of traps with Duff and the two Airedales. As the boy knew, Duff, with his partial ancestry of hound, had a marvelous nose for trailing, but, as he also knew, the dog would not fight. The Airedales, though still young dogs, were beginning to be good at the trail, and they would fight anything. The only trouble was that Duff, recognizing the racial superiority of the Airedales, had a knack of breaking off from his own trail to follow theirs; whether the right trail or not.

More than once Gavan had trouble because the Airedales broke off on a porcupine track, and, since they could not be hauled off any animal until it was dead, many an evening he had spent pulling

out spines from an Airedale's mouth and jaws, the dog being tied and gagged for the process. Duff, partly because of his yellow streak, and partly from an inborn good sense, knew enough to leave porcupines alone.

This particular morning, Gavan set the dogs on the trail of the queer bear-like track, visible here and there on the softer parts of the ground. Duff picked up the trail at once. He ran along it, nose to ground, for a little distance, then stopped, crawled away, put his tail between his legs and howled.

This was more than puzzling. Gavan sat down on a rock to think. Duff was a coward, that was sure, but he had never shown any reluctance on a trail. Not until he had sighted the animal had the dog's yellow streak ever showed itself before. As the boy well knew, Duff's manner was always of that of a ferocious beast, ready to eat up anything in sight—until that thing came in sight.

Why did the hound refuse even to follow the trail? Gavan remembered the night in Ghost Canyon and shivered.

He slipped the Airedales. They struck the hot trail and started out, one running silent, the other giving tongue.

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Gavan's hopes rose. Perhaps, after all, the trail was sufficiently fresh for the Airedales to follow it. If only some other trail did not cross! The dogs kept their straight course to the second trap, where the tracks were also faintly visible, and after smelling around for a while, dashed on. Duff followed, but shamefacedly, and behind.

Then, with a yelp, one of the Airedales shot off into the scrub, the other Airedale and Duff following.

Gavan ground his teeth, for he felt sure that this was not the trail. But the Airedales forged ahead, and after a while, far in the distance, he could hear them baying, the low raucous howl of Duff joining in.

"They've got something!" cried the boy, and dashed on at top speed.

The three dogs were jumping around a good-sized yellow pine, leaping up as though to reach it.

This could mean only one thing, that an animal was treed. Could this be the long-sought bear cub? More probably it was a mountain-lion or a bob-cat. The rough, deeply indented, strong-smelling bark of a yellow pine gave no clew. Had it been some soft-barked tree, like quaking aspen

or cork-bark spruce, Gavan could have told by the scratches in the bark.

McLeod had taught the boy the value of not wasting shots, and the death of Blue Joe Keary had made the lad very wary of running chances with a mountain lion, should such be the quarry. He was not going to shoot until he was sure of his aim. He circled the tree warily, careful lest the beast should change his mind and come down, for he knew that the cougar is the most capricious of all animals, and there was no saying what creature he might be about to face. Presently he distinguished a blur in the tree. There was the animal, surely.

But what animal?

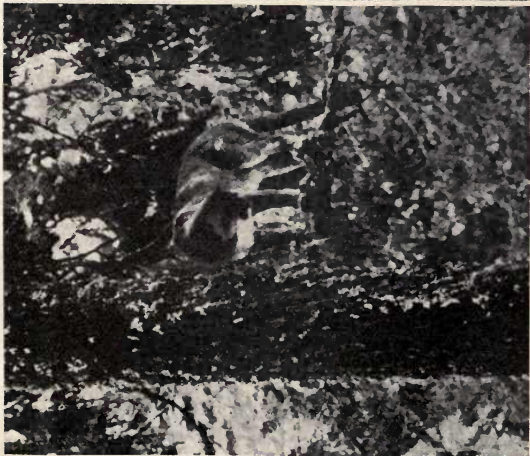
Keeping an unwinking gaze on this blur in the tree, and moving as little as possible, Gavan presently was able to make out clearly the long, lithe body of a cougar. He backed away, until he found a rock about four feet high, from which he could see the tree.

Taking careful aim, he fired, and, the instant that he pulled the trigger, scrambled up the rock, so that, if the cougar should only be wounded and should fall and charge, he would be beyond the beast's first spring.

The aim was good, the shot went true. A yowl answered the bullet, and a heavy body came crashing down through the branches. The boy saw the yellow body strike the ground and then spring to its feet, as though unhurt, but, with the same second, the two Airedales were on him. The dogs were no match for the cougar, and Gavan knew that he ought not to risk the fight to continue.

At the risk of hitting the dogs, he fired again, reaching a vital point this time, for after a few convulsive struggles, in which one of the dogs received a long tearing wound, the cougar toppled over and lay still. The dogs tore at the fur for a few minutes and then stood back, snarling and watching. This was proof positive. The cougar was dead.

Since this was the first mountain lion that the boy had shot, he was proud of himself to a certain extent, but he was discontented, none the less, for he was not after mountain lion. He was after that dwarf bear, or whatever it was that had sprung the traps. It was idle to blame such a trick on a mountain lion, for curious though a cougar may be, and annoying though its habits may be of following a lone hunter on the trail,



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

THE FULL-GROWN COUGAR IS AN UGLY CUSTOMER TO TACKLE
IF THE FIRST SHOT IS NOT MORTAL.



*Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.
Photo by Mr. Steve Baxter.*

A COLORADO BOB-CAT BROUGHT TO BAY.
THIS ANIMAL HAD ALREADY KILLED TWO OF
THE DOGS.

Gavan knew well that the cougar is far too wary to fool with traps.

With live bait, during the period of famine, any of the cats are tolerably easy to catch, and, once trapped, they submit to the inevitable. But to go and spring a trap and then spring another, and so on, he knew, could not be the work of either cougar, lynx, or bob-cat. Lynx, of course, was out of the question, for it was a northern animal purely, having its main range in Canada, though along the upper slopes of the Rockies it has been caught as far south as Colorado. Gavan had never heard of a lynx on the Sangre de Cristo Range.

But that was beside the point. None of the cat family were possessed of that mental character which would trail a trapper to spring his traps. A lobo or outlaw wolf conceivably might, for Gavan had heard Winon of the Biological Survey speak of the incredible wariness and almost human skill possessed by a much-hunted gray wolf. But the mysterious tracks were as far from those of a wolf as could be imagined. They looked like bear, and yet they didn't look like bear.

After sewing up the wound in the dog's side—it was a nasty cut, but not serious—Gavan started

homewards again. He had hardly gone a hundred yards before Duff gave voice, and started up the mountainside. The Airedales,—including the wounded dog, followed. The chase was brief. A bay lynx or bob-cat ran up a small tree and turned, spitting at the dogs. The shot was clear and easy and the bob-cat fell at the boy's feet.

A cougar and a bob-cat already, and the sun not three hours high! Gavan ought to have been satisfied, but he was not.

He wanted to find out what it was that had made that trail.

Still, the boy thought he might as well visit Antonio and show the results of his morning hunting. It was evident that the woods were full of bob-cat and cougar, as the Mexican had said, but Gavan had no fear of an unwounded cougar. Winon had told him once that there was only one absolutely authenticated case in which a cougar had attacked human beings unprovoked.

On September 23, 1917, a little after mid-day, two children, Dorcas Ashburnham, aged 11 years, and Tony Farrar, aged 8 years, left their home with bridles in their hands to bring in their ponies from a pasture about three quarters of a mile from the house. Before reaching the pasture, they

were suddenly alarmed by the sight of a cougar approaching alongside the trail. What happened then, Gavan had read in the actual stories of the children themselves, which were secured as official depositions before a notary public.¹

"I am eight years of age," the boy's story ran, "and was born at London, England, on March 9, 1908. I have lived at Corvichan Lake, British Columbia, with my mother, since 1912. On September 23, 1916, at about 1 o'clock, I left the house to go with Dorcas Ashburnham to a pasture about three quarters of a mile down the trail to catch our ponies. When about half a mile from the house, we saw a panther coming round a corner a few feet away.

"The panther sprang on Dorcas, knocking her down. It stayed on her back. I told her to keep quiet and not move, and I jumped on the panther from a small bush and hit him as hard as I could with my bridle.

"This forced him off Dorcas but he turned on me. We both fought him and he tore my nose and cheek with his paw and forced me to the

¹ Certified copies of these depositions, absolutely authenticating this story, are on file in the Parliament Building, Victoria, B. C.

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ground on my face. He then tore my back, bit me in the shoulder and tore my scalp.

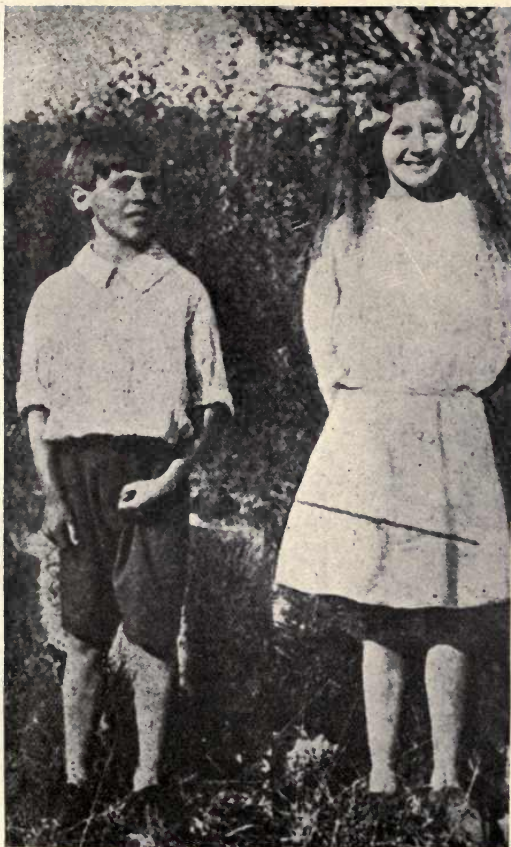
"While he remained on me, Dorcas attacked him with her riding bridle and her fists and put her arm in his mouth to prevent him biting me, and he bit her through the arm.

"The panther slunk away finally, and we both ran home covered with blood.

"I am certain that if Dorcas had not driven him off me the panther would have killed me."

Dr. Dykes, the nearest doctor, who was hastily summoned, certified that he had found the boy's injuries "to consist of a badly torn scalp, necessitating 46 stitches, and a number of cuts, scratches and bites on his back and limbs." The girl's injuries "were not so severe, consisting chiefly of some scratches from the animal's claws, and a bite through the right arm above the elbow."

Immediately after the return of the children, Chas. March, a neighbor, seized his gun, whistled to his dogs and started out. The trail was fresh and the animal evidently was traveling very slowly. It did not take to a tree, but turned on the dogs, injuring one of them badly. The hunter killed the panther, or cougar, as soon as he came up. It measured a little over seven feet from the



Courtesy of "Forest and Stream."

THE CHILDREN WHO STOOD OFF A COUGAR.
One of the very few authentic cases when a wild animal in America
made an unprovoked attack.

nose to the tip of the tail, and was estimated to weigh about 75 pounds. It had a cataract over one eye, was evidently old and the stomach was empty.

Another neighbor, Arthur L. Taylor, testified that he saw the children go out and return "covered with blood," heard their story and added: "I consider that the action of each child saved the life of the other in turn and that one is entitled to as much credit as the other, particularly as either could have escaped by sacrificing the other. I saw the dead panther brought in afterwards by Mr. March."

Chief Justice Hunter of British Columbia, a friend of the family, visited them next day. His deposition concludes: "I consider that the bravery, coolness and resource of each child saved the life of the other. I should be glad to see their actions receive proper recognition."

Finally, Sir Clive Phillips Wooley, knowing the family and living within twenty miles of the place, made an investigation, and declared: "As editor of the Badminton volumes on big Game, I investigated every available panther story and believe this to be the first authenticated instance in British Columbia of a panther attacking a human being, either unattacked or in its own defense. In spite

of this and my own experience of over thirty years, I am compelled, after a full personal investigation, to believe the children's story to be absolutely true and uncolored, and can only suggest that the attack was due to the fact that this particular panther, being partially blind, was unable to obtain his natural prey."

Another case is known in which a cougar jumped across a brook and attacked two boys, but one of the boys afterwards admitted that he had "thrown some stones at the big cat to make it go away."

While the cougar thus is timid and unwilling to fight, the bob-cat, though smaller, is a more vicious animal. There are a few cases of a bob-cat turning at bay, though none of an unprovoked attack.

"I ain't nowise partial to bob-cats," McLeod had said once to the boy. "He's just a bundle o' wires actuated by the spirit of a demon, but a lynx, a genuine Canada lynx, has him beaten as easy as three aces takes the pot from a pair o' Jacks. A wounded lynx is a power sausage-mill, a gang saw an' an electric dynamo tied up together in a loose gray hide which is hung on his bones so he can turn himself around in it without any

trouble. A dog gets a lynx by the throat an' gleefully starts to choke him to death, when the animal whirls round in his skin an' hands him a kick that slits him wide open. No, sir, a wounded luciffee ain't no beast to go up and pat on the head."

"Is a lynx a luciffee?" queried the boy. "I though hunters called the lynx a catamount."

The hunter shook his head.

"Not the Canada lynx," he says. "The catamount is heavier an' shorter, with thinner legs and smaller feet. The head is more arched an' he's got more sense than a luciffee. The teeth an' claws are a trifle smaller though. *Lynx gigas*, the scientists call him. They're pretty hard to tell apart until you've shot 'em. Then you can spot 'em easy. The catamount's tail is straight and stiff, while the luciffee's tilts upwards. Besides, the fur of the catamount is browner than the grizzled pelage of the Canada lynx."

Gavan had often heard the expression to designate courage and pugnacity, that "a man could whip his weight in wildcats," but he had enough experience of the woods to know that it is as difficult to make a wild cat fight a man as it would be to make a rabbit do it, unless actually cornered and without any way of escape. On some rare

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occasions, lynxes in winter, when game is scarce, have leaped from trees on passing travelers.¹

As he rode townwards with the skins of the cougar and the bob-cat on his saddle, however, Gavan came to a decision. It was clear that he could not trail the unknown beast alone, it was equally clear that neither Quick Feather nor McLeod would help him, and experience had shown that Duff was afraid and that other dogs would leave that mysterious trail for any other that crossed it.

The issue was clear. He must do as he had done with the Wolf-Woman in Ghost Canyon, and as he had done with the Mexicans in the irrigation ditch. He must do the watching. Night after night, not regularly, but sufficiently often, the traps along the line were sprung and the bait taken. Gavan was by no means sure that this could not be the work of a Mexican cabal, but how could the tracks be so different from human feet? Gavan had put to himself the probability that this was some one wearing shoes to which the foot of an animal had been nailed, but he had been forced

¹ The only case that the author has personally known was when a hunter, going to a spring, drove a famished lynx from his freshly killed prey. The lynx ran to a tree and sprang at the hunter from the back.

to abandon this idea, for the imprint of the tracks was not nearly as deep as his own, and he was but a boy.

Accordingly, two nights later, having carefully set and rebaited his traps, Gavan took up a position in a thick brush near that trap which was most open to view, selecting for the purpose a moonlight night, with a gentle wind. Needless to say, his post was to leeward, not to windward of the trap line.

Darkness fell and the raiders of the night began to move. In the distance Gavan heard a wild-woman-screech, which he had been taught to recognize as the screech of the cougar.¹ The trailing echo of a howl told of a wolf hunting alone, and Gavan wondered, for he had seen no timber-wolf track in the mountains. There was a slight

¹ In spite of some considerable study, the author is not able to solve this question as to whether the cougar possesses or uses a screech. U. S. Government hunters and trappers, generally, declare that it does, and are willing to be quoted as saying so; stories of frontiersmen and pioneers speak always of the panther's screech. The author has collected from over thirty different actual workers in the field absolute assurance that they have heard the screech of the cougar and have shot the animal shortly afterwards. Yet the majority of well-known naturalists declare that the cougar does not screech and that all these trappers have mistaken the cry of a screech-owl for the cry of the panther. The controversy is still unsettled, and the reader can take his choice.

sound in the bushes and with a suddenness that seemed like magic an owl swooped and caught the little mouse that was his prey. Gavan knew and felt that eyes were shining around him on every side, but he did not move.

What was that?

Moving there in the shadow?

There came into the moonlight a figure so strange, so ugly, so impossible that, had the boy dared to move sufficiently to rub his eyes, he would have done so to prove that he was awake.

A low, squat, disreputable creature with a rough mop of a tail emerged from the bushes. The tail and head were pointed at the ground; the back arched like the back of an enraged cat when she spits; the feet were set down flat like hands, or like a bear's feet, there was a glint of long white claws, which rattled faintly on the stones; and the coat, of a rusty brown-black, looked as if it were being shed, though that disreputable look was its permanent state.

This untoward, ill-kempt, malevolent-appearing beast shambled on with a gait that was all its own, an out-of-heel, devil-may-care, go-as-you-please shuffle, part gallop, part trot, part slide, and the whole appearance was of the shades, shady.



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

COUGAR SOLIDLY HELD IN TRAP.

The photograph gives the impression of an animal screeching, yet the cougar (contrary to general opinion) is rarely, if ever, heard to utter a cry, other than a low snarling or spitting sound.



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

ROUND-UP ON A NATIONAL FOREST IN ARIZONA.

During calving time, the depredations of cougars on the cattle ranches are enormous. The probable loss is not less than half a million dollars annually.

Thus seen, the creature suggested a powerful vagabond, certainly not the creature to meet on a dark night, but not necessarily alarming.

He scrambled toward the trap and turned his face.

It was not a face that belonged on this earth at all.

It was the face of a nightmare, of an evil nightmare. It was the face of a strayed fiend who ought never to have been allowed above ground at all, even by night.

Black it was, and with a dog-like snout, lips raised in a malicious leer, just enough to hint at the steely fangs beneath, a low brutal brow, and eyes as of tiny coals smouldering, in which lurked all the hate of the wild folk against Man concentrated into one brain. There, too, brewed something else, not hate, but a knowledge and cunning which it is not right for any beast to possess.

He came near the trap, smelt, looked, and, in the moonlight, Gavan could have sworn that the beast actually grinned. Then, with his white claws he scratched at the ground—not where the trap was, but where the chain lay—uncovered the chain in a couple of powerful strokes, then grabbed the trap by the under side of the springs, almost as

though he were a mechanic who understood the making of a trap, and shook it until the pan jumped from the pin and the jaws closed with a snap.

Then the beast put up his face to the moon, and laughed. He laughed, he who was but a beast.

Gavan, no coward, shivered. The almost-human wisdom of the fearsome beast was uncanny. Cold chills ran along his spine.

Then the creature turned to the ground squirrel, staked just beyond the trap for bait, which, evidently frozen by fear, had not made a sound. A crunch or two finished the meal.

Gavan's fingers trembled on the trigger of his gun, but he refrained. He was, by temperament, a trapper rather than a hunter, and it goaded him to see this disreputable fiend beat him at every point. He swore he would catch that creature in a trap and bring it back to town for Antonio and all the world to see. And, while he was thus deciding, the creature snuffed along the trail and shambled off to the next trap to repeat the performance.

Stiff from cold and strain, Gavan went home, and next day sought his friend the Forest Supervisor for advice. The Forester listened awhile

then pulled down a treasured number of a magazine from a shelf. He ran his fingers over a number of colored plates illustrating an article by E. W. Nelson, Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey, and placing his finger on one of the pictures, he said,

"Did your monster look anything like that?"

"Yes!" cried the boy excitedly, "that's him!"

"Well," said the Forester, "if you take my advice, next time you see him you'll use your gun, for you'll have a deuce of a time to trap him."

"But what is he called?" asked the boy, for the Forester had purposely kept his hand over the title of the picture.

The other leaned back in his chair.

"Tens of thousands of years ago," he said, "when the mammoth still stalked about the streets of London, when mastodons were wallowing in Chicago's swales, when the saber-tooth tiger was roaming along the banks of the Seine where Paris stands now, your disreputable friend was equally at home from the site of Pekin to that of Stockholm, from that of Boston to Seattle. He was the same that he is to-day. He feared nothing and nobody. Even the great cave-bear gave him a wide berth.

“Among all the changes of the world, he has not changed. The bones of his ancestors, found in peat and stone, sunk in caves laden with the river-drift, show him contemporaneous with many an extinct monster, but he is unchanged and unchanging. Your friend, Gavan, may point to at least 200,000 years of continuous ancestry.

“What is he called? He is called by many names. The Indians call him ‘Friend of Cunning,’ the frontiersmen called him ‘Indian Devil,’ the French coureurs de bois called him the ‘carcajou,’ the English settlers of Canada knew him as the ‘glutton,’ and modern science knows him as the ‘wolverine.’ He is the most powerful of the weasel family, and, like the weasel, is absolutely without fear. Even the big gray wolf, the scourge of the wold, prefers not to rouse the savage and ruthless ferocity of the wolverine. Once, two gray wolves, lean with hunger, met with a wolverine. He snarled and they slunk away. Yet those two wolves would have made short work of a full-grown buffalo.

“There are a good many stories told about the wolverine, many of them true, some exaggerated. But I chance to know one that happened to my cousin, in the wooded country southwest of Hud-



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

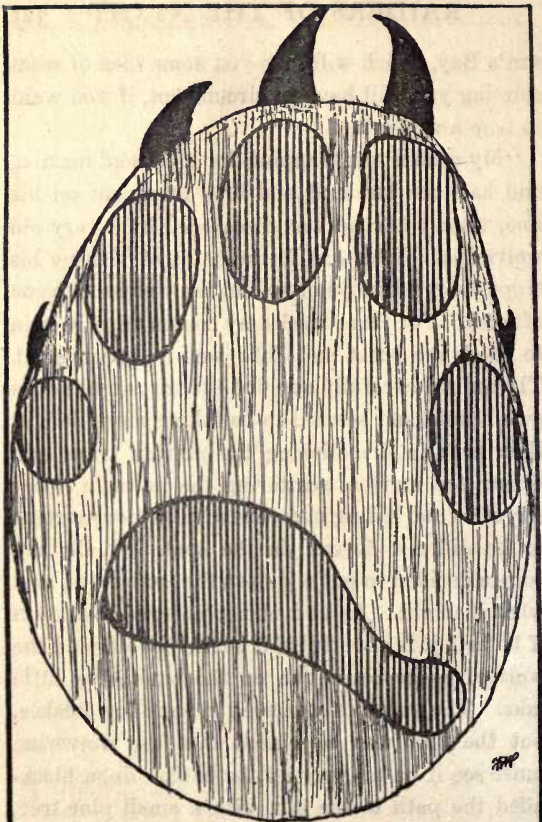
THE BEST-HATED ANIMAL ON EARTH.

The wolverine of the north is well described by his popular names, "glutton," "rogue," "mountain devil," "skunk bear," and "carcajou." He is the trapper's chief enemy and possesses a malignant intelligence which often outwits human craft.

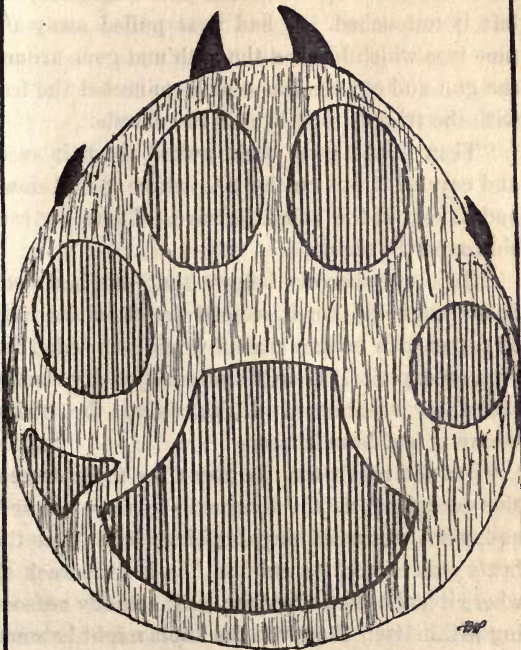
son's Bay, which will give you some idea of what cunning you will have to circumvent, if you want to trap a wolverine.

“My cousin was trapping for mink and marten, and had one hundred and fifty traps out on his line, when the road was discovered by a very old wolverine. John was in the habit of visiting his traps every ten days or so, but the wolverine came oftener. For three weeks my cousin tried in vain to catch the beast and John was no green hand. The animal carefully avoided the traps set for his own benefit and seemed to be taking more delight than ever in demolishing the marten traps and eating the marten, scattering the poles in every direction and hiding in caches such bait or martens as he did not devour on the spot. Finally my cousin decided to put a stop to the annoyance, cost what it might. As he had not poison—and, even if he had, it is doubtful if it would have fooled the wolverine—he set a gun on the bank of a little lake. The gun was concealed in some low bushes, but the bait was so placed that the wolverine must see it on his way up the bank. John blockaded the path to the gun with a small pine-tree, which completely hid the weapon.

“On his first visit afterward, he found that the



Wolverine - Left hind-foot.



Wolverine or Indian Devil.

Left fore-foot (Note mark of thumb.)

Claws are formidable, but set far back, making little side track.

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beast had gone up to the bait and smelled it, but left it untouched. It had next pulled away the pine tree which blocked the path and gone around the gun and cut the line which connected the bait with the trigger, just behind the muzzle.

“Then it had gone back, pulled the bait away and carried it out on the lake where it laid down and devoured the bait at leisure. There my cousin found the string.

“He could scarcely believe that this had been done designedly, for it seemed that faculties fully on a par with human reason would be needed for such an exploit, if done intentionally. My cousin, therefore, rearranged things, tying the string where it had been bitten.

“But the result was the same for three successive occasions, as the footprints plainly showed, and, what was most singular of all, each time the brute was careful to cut the line a little back of where it had been tied before, as if actually reasoning within itself that even the knots might be some new trick of Man’s and therefore a source of hidden danger it might prudently avoid.¹

¹ This wolverine story, one of the classic cases, was an actual occurrence to a Mr. Lockhart, trapping in the Peel’s River country. It may be found in detail in Andersch Bros’ “Hunters’ and Trappers’ Guide,” a valuable work for practical trapping.

“How do you reckon that the wolverine knew that the gun meant danger? Still more, how could he reason that there was less danger near the butt of the gun than the muzzle? And, further yet, how could he follow the plan that the line was the connecting point? Is not that more like human than animal reasoning?

“It was the same wolverine, that, a little later, found a hare in a steel trap which had been set for himself. He not only devoured the hare, but actually picked up the trap, gnawed it away from the stake, and carried that trap a mile away, up hill and down dale, with many twists and turns to elude a possible pursuer and then hid the trap in a hole he dug for the purpose. That beast was not only not content with springing the trap, but actually wanted to leave the trapper without traps, so as to minimize his own risk. How’s that for reasoning?”

“Did your cousin ever catch the wolverine?” asked Gavan.

“He did, at last,” the Forester answered. “He had begun to miss a number of things from his cabin, including his only frying-pan, and he knew well that when he was out on the trap line, the wolverine stole from the cabin, and when he was

in the cabin the beast stole from the trap line. Now, my cousin figured, while an animal might have learnt a great deal about traps and matters like that, in the wild, it would not know much about houses. Accordingly he polished a small saucepan until it was bright, knowing the wolverine's love for bright things, and left a savory greasy mess in the pot, burned a little and stuck to the bottom. In the pot he placed a piece of lead. Then he balanced this pot on a long stick of wood which propped up the door, and fastened a strong spring from the door to the door post.

"This done, my cousin went out on his trap-line, chuckling at the thought of the trick which he would play on the wolverine. When he came back, a couple of hours later, the door was shut. Peering through the rough window, made from the thinly scraped intestines of a deer, he saw something dark moving on the floor. Pulling open the sash, he poked his rifle through the window and fired. It took a second shot before the wolverine rolled over and lay still. From that day on, not a single trap was disturbed."

"Were there no other wolverines around?" asked the boy.

"Evidently not. They are not social animals,

and it is rare to find two close together. As for this wolverine that you have seen, I haven't the least idea how he could have got here. Wolverine used to be found in quantities in Utah and Colorado, but for thirty or forty years, I haven't heard of one south of Montana. What has brought him so far out of his range, I haven't an idea, but, from your description, I should say it's an old beast, long isolated from his fellows and which has come along the Colorado mountains, crossing the plains in winter. After all, the Sangre de Cristo joins up pretty well with the range of the Rockies.

"Maybe he's got rheumatism or consumption and has come south for his health!" he concluded, smiling at the lad.

"It isn't going to be healthy for him," answered the boy savagely, "at least, not if I can help it. I'm going to catch the scoundrel alive, if it takes a fortnight!"

"You'll be lucky to succeed, if it takes all summer," responded the Forester. "Why don't you get Quick Feather to help you?"

"I tried," the boy answered, and related the old Indian's fear of "bad medicine."

The Forester opened his eyes in surprise.

“Evidently he knew what the tracks meant,” he said; “I don’t wonder at an Indian thinking that beast ‘bad medicine.’ That’s what he is. But how do you propose to go about catching him?”

“I don’t know yet,” answered the boy, for he did not want to give away his plans. “But I’ll fool him—you see if I don’t!”

But, as he rode home, Gavan puzzled himself to think how he could trap that wolverine. He lay awake most of the night, and, towards morning an idea occurred to him. He went to sleep on it.

“You see, Duff,” he said, addressing the old dog, as was his habit in the long lonely times in the cabin—for, after all, Gavan was young to live alone, month after month,—“you see, Duff, this beast isn’t afraid of man. If he were, he wouldn’t go into a house. He’s sprung those traps so often now, and got a good meal out of it, that he’s likely to continue. Suppose,” he continued, “I should make a box trap, like for rabbits, and put the steel trap inside, with the live bait. If the wolverine found that steel trap and sprung it, he’d be satisfied that he’d found out the trick and would go to the squirrel without thinking. Then I could make a sliding door with a

figure-four pin, and Mr. Wolverine would be caught!"

It meant work, but Gavan was not afraid of work. He set out the following morning with an ax and built around one of the traps a strong stockade of poles about three inches thick which he drove into the ground six inches deep. On these he laid logs, weighted with stones, and made a sliding catch which, when the live squirrel was seized, would pull down the door.

Next day, hardly waiting for daylight, Gavan rode up to the trap. As he drew near he could have shouted for joy.

The door was sprung!

Hastily jumping off his horse, Gavan ran up to the box trap and peered in.

It was empty!

Flabbergasted, the boy walked round, only to find a deep hole under the stockade. The wolverine had quietly sprung the trap, eaten the squirrel and then dug his way out. Gavan had forgotten the gnawing properties of those powerful teeth. Had the boy been a bit younger, he would have cried; as it was, he only set his teeth and determined to get that wolverine, anyway.

He baited that trap, as before, to make the beast

think that this was the only point of danger and went on to the next one, this time taking not only an ax, but a shovel as well. He dug under that trap a pit at least six feet deep, and lined the sides of it with split poles, the bottom being floored as well as sides. Then, over the pit, he laid a frail platform of rotten sticks, sprinkled dead leaves over them and then set the trap, finally covering all with a thin layer of earth as usual. This took the whole day, and Gavan rode home that night well-pleased with himself. Surely the wolverine would be caught at last!

Early the next morning he rode to the trap. The hole yawned open! Had he caught the wolverine—or had something else trodden there?

With his heart beating like a trip-hammer for excitement, the boy peered in.

Nothing was to be seen save a deep hole leading down into the ground.

Could the wolverine have got away?

It would have been easy enough to have found out by dropping one of the Airedales into the pit, for the terrier would have asked nothing better than to follow the wolverine into his hole, but Gavan was afraid for his dogs. He knew that a gray wolf could make hay of half-a-dozen dogs

and that a wolverine was not afraid of a gray wolf. The Airedale might easily get the worst of the fight, and, if he did not, the wolverine might be killed. Gavan wanted him alive.

As he was looking, and wondering, the head of the wolverine, with its demon face, looking almost as evil by daylight as at night, poked itself out of the hole and the beast leaped upwards.

Gavan started back in alarm.

But the sides of the hole were too steep for climbing, with the poles flattened so that they gave no hold, and the distance was too high for a heavy, squat creature such as the wolverine to cover by a leap.

Full of triumph, Gavan ran to his horse, took the lariat, and deftly dropped the running noose over the neck of the wolverine.

The prey was caught.

Then, like a flash, Gavan found himself face to face with a serious problem. He was in exactly the same position as that of the cowboy who had lassoed a bear. It had been easy enough to lasso him, the question was how to get rid of him. Gavan had often laughed at the ranch boss's description of the lassoed bear chasing the cowboy, every once in a while being choked into sub-

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mission, but resuming the chase as soon as he got his breath.

Likewise, Gavan had the wolverine, but if he let go the slack of the noose for a moment, it was evident that the brute would bite through the rope. Then an idea occurred to him. Taking the chains off three of the traps, the one that had been set and two that he was carrying with him, he wired the rings together and made a ring of chain which he dropped over the beast's neck, with the other end of the rope. This done, he bent down a small tree near by and fastened the rope to it so that there would be a strain on the beast's neck, not enough to choke it, but enough to keep it from continuing to dig the hole, while, at the same time, the chain would prevent the wolverine biting itself free. Then Gavan spurred for Antonio's home.

"I've caught your thief," he cried, "but it isn't a bear, it's an Indian devil."

The Mexican misunderstood.

"I kill him," he said.

"No," explained the boy, "it's not a real Indian, but a beast, a wolverine. I'll show you. I caught him in a pit and I want to take him out alive, but I don't know how."



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

THE ANIMAL SPIRIT OF EVIL.

Clumsy, cunning, and ferocious, the wolverine is the largest member of the bloodthirsty weasel family, and was feared by the Indians even more than a grizzly she-bear with cubs.



The Mexican's eyes lightened.

"I can do that," he said.

Sending his oldest boy to call two or three of his neighbors, he took a large cowhide and a bundle of baling wire. Reaching the pit, and ignoring the boy's protest that they would choke the animal to death, he pulled the wolverine out of the pit.

Two other Mexicans threw themselves on the animal, wrapping the cowhide around it before it had a chance to strike out with the claws. The bit of a horse's bridle was forced into the jaws and tied back to the forelegs. Then, cautiously, the hind-legs were released and tied, the forelegs likewise, and the beast thrown up on the saddle in front of Gavan, who bore him in triumph to the town, displaying to the people of Taos the first wolverine captured alive in New Mexico.

But, what was even more important to Gavan, he was vindicated in the eyes of all the Mexicans, and even those who had been the readiest to show hostility came forward and proffered friendship, a friendship which Gavan came to learn to value as much as that of any English-speaking American.

CHAPTER XI

CATCHING THE WEREWOLF

The capture of the wolverine not only increased Gavan's reputation, but also added to the small bank account which he was building up. As before, the XO Ranch had agreed to pasture his stock during the summer, the very small charge therefor being taken out of the price of the hay which Gavan was raising on his irrigated land. Likewise, his early spring catch of coyotes had brought him in quite a snug little sum of money for the fur, and now he sold the wolverine to a menagerie for seventy-five dollars. It was a good haul.

Not only did the victory over the wolverine give Gavan local prestige, for no one had ever seen such a beast before, but, from the scientific point of view, the capture of the beast in the mountains of New Mexico, so far south of its usual range, was of biological importance. Accordingly, Winon wrote to the boy asking him for all the de-

tails and for photographs of the animal, as well as exact reports concerning its method of capture. Gavan worked these up with great care, thanks to the aid of the Forest Supervisor, and these reports brought Gavan even more conspicuously before the eyes of those who were already watching his career with interest.

As Winon had written in a letter to Washington:

"This young fellow, Gavan Keary, seems to have a natural ability as a trapper. I enclose his record of coyotes caught during the months of April and May and also the account of his capture of the wolverine, with affidavits, for which you asked. I also wish to report that he has spent some time with one of our bear-trappers, J. J. McLeod, and I am informed by the latter that the aforementioned Gavan Keary proved himself an able assistant.

"As the work of the Biological Survey, here, needs more men, and these men should preferably be trained in our ways, I contemplate, if this meets with the wishes of the Department, to give Keary some temporary work this summer. He, himself, is anxious to be employed by the Government."

None of which correspondence Gavan knew anything about, only, he worked to the utmost to win the good opinions of his desired chief. Now, when coyotes were found to run by certain trails,

the Mexicans, who had been his enemies before, voluntarily came and told him. The boy's catch of animals increased. Young Mexican lads, ten years of age, would undertake the responsibility of looking after one or two traps for him, at outlying parts of his range, and count it a triumph for themselves when they found a coyote or a bob-cat caught.

Then, one day, the ranch boss rode over to Gavan's place, his face dark and lowering.

"Youngster," he said peremptorily, "do you know I've lost as many as a couple dozen cattle in two weeks by a wolf?"

"No," answered the boy, a little resentful at Thin-lip Jack's tone, though knowing that it was only his manner. "I heard, though, that a tourist party had come by the other day and cut your fence. Sure the cattle haven't escaped and are out on the mountains somewhere?"

"Think I'm a fool?" queried the ranch boss, roughly. "I ain't no professional trapper like you—" the ranch boss was really fuming within, or he would not have sneered at the boy, who was one of his special favorites—"but I know a wolf-track when I see one. An' this is large enough an' deep enough for a wolf the size of a horse."

Gavan looked up quickly.

"But there aren't any wolves the size of a horse," he said quietly.

The ranch boss broke out angrily.

"Of all the durn fool—"

Then he stopped at the expression on the lad's face.

"What are you throwin' your rope at?" he queried.

"I'm not quite a 'professional trapper'—yet," the boy returned, not being able to resist the taunt, "but, just the same, I haven't forgotten some queer things that have happened around here. Do you remember Blue Joe Keary?"

"Of course, but what in blazes has he got to do with it? He's dead."

"Sure," agreed Gavan, "he's dead, but do you remember how he died, and what I saw the night I watched over his body?"

"Well, boy?" queried Thin-lip Jack, impatiently.

"Those tracks were large enough and deep enough for a wolf the size of a horse," said Gavan meaningly.

"You mean that Wolf-Woman business?"

"It never did get cleared up, did it?" hazarded

the boy. "And they had trouble over in the Pecos Valley, last year, the same way. I heard about it through Mr. Winon."

The ranch boss threw a leg over the horn of his saddle and rolled a cigarette, his hard face set into even grimmer lines.

"Spooks don't rustle cattle," he said at last, "or, if they do, they've got to show me. Suppose you drop this coyote business for a while an' see if you can get a line on my cattle. I'll make it worth your while."

"I'll do it, without that," said the lad. "So far as my line is concerned, I know a couple of Mexican boys who'll be only too glad to watch my traps for me if I give 'em half of what they catch. Sure, Jack, I'll come up to the ranch this evening and see if I can find out anything. I'm not a 'professional trapper,' though," he ended with a laugh, "so you mustn't expect too much."

"Forget that 'professional' business," said the ranch boss. "I was sore. Any one would be sore if his cattle were leakin out like water from a pail with a hole in it."

Which was the nearest approach to an apology that Thin-lip Jack had ever made.

Gavan reached the ranch house that night and

found the usual welcome awaiting him. He was popular with the cowboys, and he liked the crowd himself. They ragged him unmercifully when he appeared, for each of them had tried to solve the mystery of the tracks. But Gavan was unperturbed. He had lived in the West too long not to know how to stand chaff.

The following morning, with "Pinto" as his guide, Gavan rode out to the place where the wolf-tracks had been seen. By great good luck it had not rained recently on that hillside, although, as customarily, there had been showers all round and on every side.

One look at the prints was enough for Gavan. He turned to Pinto, who was watching him with great interest, and said quietly:

"Those are the same tracks I saw in Ghost Canyon," he said. "Now let's see where the fence was cut."

"D'ye suppose the wolf cut the fence?" queried the cow-puncher.

"Doesn't sound reasonable, does it?" the boy admitted. "But you can't ever tell about a wolf, leastways, not a wolf as heavy as to make that kind of a track."

"You dope it out that it ain't a wolf at all,

then," asked the cattleman, catching an inner meaning in the boy's words.

"I don't know," the boy replied, "I'm just trying to find out. But, three years ago, when Blue Joe died, Quick Feather said the tracks weren't those of a wolf. I've watched Quick Feather a lot of times since then, and I've never found him wrong on a track."

"Well," said Pinto, after they had ridden a few hundred yards along the fence, "I don't see what you're drivin' at. Anyway, here's where the fence was cut. There ain't nothin' to see here now, the rain's washed all the tracks away. But they was the wheels of a buzz-wagon all right, with the tires showin' like the regular ones on a tin Lizzie."

Gavan straightened up.

"The wheel-marks are washed away and the wolf-tracks aren't," he remarked. "What was the last day you had rain right around here?"

The cowboy thought a moment.

"Thursday," he said, "there was a right smart shower."

"And you missed the cattle, when?"

"Around the end o' the week, some time."

"Pinto," said the boy, "between you and me,

I think the buzz-wagon and the wolf are working up a deal together."

"How?" asked the cowboy.

But the boy shook his head, declining to reveal his plans.

"I'll have to talk it over with Jack, first," he said, "your chaps would guy me off the place if I came in with the wrong dope."

"Maybe they would," the other agreed, and they turned the ponies' heads for the home corral.

Gavan made a bee-line for the ranch boss, and took him aside, talking to him earnestly. The ranch boss looked at first incredulous, then rapidly grew more interested. Finally he swung on his heel.

"I'll take a chance," he said, and called to one of the younger men to ride to Taos for the sheriff. Another of the cowboys was sent to a neighboring ranch with the simple statement that as many men as could be spared were needed to round up some cattle-rustlers. The other riders on the place opened their eyes at this message, but Thin-lip Jack gave no further information.

By afternoon, sixty men were gathered and the sheriff, having had a long conference with Gavan and Thin-lip Jack, addressed the crowd.

"I suppose you all know," he said, "that there's been quite a few cattle lost lately, not only right around here, but in the Pecos an' higher up the range. Some of it has been due to wolves, an' some to bear, *maybe*, but the number lost is too many for the wolf an' bear tracks that have been seen. McLeod, here, is as good a bear-hunter as there is in the state of New Mexico, an' our young friend, Gavan Keary, isn't any slouch when it comes to wolves an' coyotes. Quick Feather, a wonder on the trail, as most of you know, has been examinin' the tracks, an' Mr. Winon, the head of the Biological Survey in this state, when he was here made a careful study of the situation, too. They all agree that the predatory animals to be found here do not in any reasonable proportion tally with the losses.

"Now, boys, we're all agreed that the cattle which have disappeared both on this side of the mountains an' in the Pecos Valley have been taken by two-legged wolves. We're sure there's a gang of cattle-rustlers workin' in the mountains, and Gavan has given us a possible clew as to where they are. Nothin's definite as yet, but there's no use in scarin' the gang away in case they're the men we're lookin' for. We don't want any

shootin' if we can help it. Let's have everything done in law and order.

"Pinto, here, who knows the mountains like an old buffalo knows his way to a salt-lick, will lead half the boys to a saddle-back away back of Three-of-a-Kind Spring, near the divide. Any men or any cattle comin' up that way are to be turned back. The rest of you will go down to where the Ghost Canyon runs into Pot Creek. No one is to get by, but keep the guns quiet if you can. Don't hesitate to shoot, though, if any one escapes. An' so that everything may be regular, I'll swear the lot of you in as deputy sheriffs for the day. Hold up your right hands."

The oath was duly administered and taken. Then the sheriff continued:

"Thin-lip Jack, Clip Corbett (a neighboring ranchman), the boy an' I are goin' to do a little climbin' on foot, an' I want a couple of the boys to come with us, in case I have to send word to either of the two bunches. I want some one who knows the country an' isn't scared to use his spurs."

The ranch boss named a couple of his men.

"I don't know," ended the sheriff, "any more than you do, just what we're goin' to find, but

I'm bankin' on it that we find somethin'. The evidence is tolerable plain. Now, boys, off with you!"

The two cavalcades rode off with much laughing and shouting, and when they had gone, the sheriff turned to Gavan.

"You're sure you know your way to the place?"

"Sure," the boy answered, confidently. "I wanted to blaze a trail, but I was afraid some one might see and get wind of what was up. But I made careful note and can take you there straight, I'm positive."

"Let's go, then," said the sheriff, and he unwrapped a parcel which he had carried on his saddle, exposing a large megaphone.

Gavan grinned at the sight of it.

"That's a good idea, Hunch," he said.

"I've got a right smart likin' for my skin," the sheriff replied, "an' if I can work this dodge without showin' myself, so much the better."

The small party of six swung into their saddles and started. After a couple of hours' ride, Gavan turned to the sheriff.

"I believe we had better leave our horses here," he said, when they had reached an open mountain

meadow surrounded on three sides by rocky walls, "it's a stiff climb from now on."

The boy was right. The climb was more than stiff, it was precipitous, and Gavan, as well as the rest of the men, had to stop and blow for breath before they were halfway up.

"You ain't tryin' to make us think they took cattle up here?" queried the ranch boss.

"No," said the boy, "I haven't the faintest idea how the cattle got in. But there's cattle in the canyon, I'm sure, just the same."

They set their faces to the cliff again, and climbed and scrambled for an hour. Then Gavan uttered an exclamation.

"Just on the dot!" he said. "There's two stones I put one on top of the other, so that I should come the right way. It's not so far, now."

Followed a slithering scramble down into a ravine, at which Thin-lip Jack looked puzzled.

"I used to run cattle over this part o' the mountains when it was all open range," he said, "but I never saw this valley afore."

"My dogs ran a bear-track over here once," the boy replied, "that's how I found it. But the bear knew more than I did, or the dogs either, for

he got away suddenly, just as if he'd taken an aëroplane."

"Where do we go from here?" queried one of the cowboys, looking around on all sides.

"Up the cliffs," said Gavan, pointing to another sheer climb ahead of them.

"Wings would be handy," was the only comment, and the men started to climb. It seemed almost inaccessible and assuredly no one on horseback could have made the ascent. Only on foot could the place be reached.

"I'm not as young as I used to be," was the sheriff's panting comment, when he reached the top. "How much more of this is there, Gavan?"

"Not much more," said the boy. "We're nearly there."

He led the way along the ridge for a quarter of a mile or so, then stopped suddenly.

"Look," he said, "aren't those cattle down there?"

The men crowded together and followed the pointing finger.

The sheriff was the first to catch sight of some brown specks in a valley far below.

"They sure are," he said, "but how do you know that they're not some of the XO bunch?"

The ranch boss answered that question.

"They may be some of my brand," he said, "but I'll swear I never had a round-up here, whatever. Suppose we go down an' have a look at 'em?"

An hour's cautious climbing brought the party to the lower valley lands, and Thin-lip Jack, advancing quietly to the edge of the brush, scanned the herd. Nearly a hundred head were feeding quietly together.

"There's some o' my brand," he said, grimly, when he came back, "an' I saw three or four o' yours, Chip, some of the Circle Arrow, an' I don't know what all. Now, where's the nest o' these varmints? I'd like to get my paws on 'em an' show 'em what's what!"

The sheriff shook his head.

"No, Jack," he said, "that isn't the idea at all, at all. What's the use o' gettin' shot up for nothin'? Let me fire my shout-gun first," and he motioned to the megaphone.

"All right, Hunch," the ranch boss answered; "you're dealin' this hand. But I don't want the gang to get away."

"They won't!" answered the sheriff, confidently. "The rest o' the boys 'll take care o'

that." Then, turning to Gavan, he added, "do you know where their camp is?"

"I don't," the boy answered, "I was afraid to hunt around alone, too much. I knew if they were rustlers, they'd shoot first and ask questions afterwards. But it ought to be up the valley, oughtn't it? A camp is generally near a spring."

"Sure!" agreed the sheriff, nodding approval of this principle, and the six men, as quietly as they could, ascended the valley, climbing a side hill at the same time. Then, in the distance, the ranch boss suddenly halted.

"I saw somethin' shine," he said, and stepped back a pace or two, moving his head sideways and back and forward. "There it is again," he exclaimed. "See, Hunch?"

He stepped back, and the sheriff took the same spot, at last getting the point.

"Something bright, that's sure," the sheriff agreed. "Suppose it's a window?"

"Must be," the ranch boss agreed, "I don't know anything else as would shine as bright. But if it's a window, where's the house?"

"I don't think it could be a window, Hunch," put in the boy.

"Why not?"

"Because a window wouldn't shine unless it reflected the sun, and the sun isn't behind our backs but 'way over to the west."

"Well, then, what do you think it is? A diamond mine?"

"It might be a tin can," the boy hazarded.

The ranch boss brought his hand against his thigh with a resounding slap.

"The lad's hit it!" he declared. "I bet a stack o' blue chips that's just what it is—a tin can. Like enough, the camp won't be so far away. But where are the tents?"

"They might be camouflaged," the sheriff suggested, "covered with green boughs or the like. That would make 'em durn hard to see."

"Let's make for the tin can, then," said Thinlip Jack. "We ought to be somewhere near, then."

The party descended cautiously.

Then, through the silence of the woods, came the most familiar of all camp sounds, an ax-blow.

The sheriff held up his hand for silence. Every one knew the sound. Some one was cutting wood for the camp. Yet, though the sheriff's party was so close, not a sign of the camp could be seen. Stealthily the six men approached.

Woodsmen all, their footsteps were scarcely audible. Then voices were to be heard, speaking Spanish. Even so, not a sign of a camp could be seen.

Whispering, the sheriff disposed the men so that each one was hidden behind a large tree or rock. Then, taking a concealed position, he lifted the megaphone and called, in a clear, penetrating voice, in Spanish,

“Hands up!”

There was a dead silence. The blows of the ax ceased. The forest fell still.

“Your game is over,” came this mysterious hollow voice from the megaphone. “This is Hunch Capton, the sheriff, speakin’. Your bunch o’ stolen cattle has been seen an’ identified, both ends of the canyon are held by XO and Circle Arrow men. Do you give yourselves up?”

The ensuing silence was suddenly split by a fusillade. The bullets rattled against the walls of the opposite side of the canyon, for the echo made it seem as though the voice came from that side. Immediately thereafter, there was a rattle of bars.

“Getting the horses out,” said Thin-lip Jack. “Hunch, let me rush ’em!”

But the sheriff held him back.

"If you surrender peaceably," he continued, in the low megaphone drone, "I'll see that you get a fair trial. If you don't, there's fifty men at each end of the canyon with orders to shoot at sight."

Then a voice answered.

"If you're Hunch Capton," it said, "show yourself!"

The sheriff chuckled.

"They think we're on the other side o' the canyon," he whispered. "Jack, you and Chip back me up, but don't fire unless I drop."

The two men protested.

"We'll tackle them together," they said.

The sheriff's jaw set firm.

"You'll do as I say," he said, curtly. "This is my job!"

As quietly as an Indian, the two ranchmen following, the sheriff started down the hill. He was nearer the camp than he knew, for suddenly, he came upon the clearing. Five men, each with drawn guns, were facing the opposite side of the clearing, watching the rugged hillside.

"We've got the drop on you," said a quiet voice in their rear, and the rustlers wheeled to

see Hunch Capton and two men behind him. One of the rustlers shot as he turned, and the bullet whizzed close to the sheriff's ear. The reply was almost instantaneous. Before the echo of the rustler's shot had reached the opposite cliff, Hunch's gun spoke, and the would-be slayer fell in his tracks.

"If any of the rest of you wants to take that death-trail," remarked the sheriff, menacingly, "all he has to do is to make a move."

He advanced slowly, the two ranchmen following.

"There are four of you and six guns with the drop on you," continued the sheriff, "what's the answer?"

At that instant, the clatter of horse's hoofs was heard. The rustlers' eyes lightened, but the three men facing them were too old hands to turn their heads around to see what might be going on.

"Drop those guns o' yours," the official added, sternly. "Drop 'em right on the ground, an' pronto!"

Sullenly, first one and then another dropped his gun, until four guns were on the ground, five, in fact, for one of the men had held two six-shooters.

"You can take about three paces forward,

now," the sheriff ordered, "that'll keep you from bein' tempted to pick 'em up again. An' the first man that draws a knife won't have any time to say his prayers."

"He sure won't," appended Thin-lip Jack, grimly.

The rustlers obeyed the order. They had recognized the three men and knew them to be among the quickest and best shots in the mountains. The sheriff slipped his guns back into place and strode forward with a pair of handcuffs, which he clipped on the apparent leader of the band. Then, snatching the handkerchiefs which were around the men's necks, he tied the hands of the other three. This done, he searched them for weapons, throwing out a little arsenal of guns and knives.

With the rustlers thus reduced to harmlessness, he flung a question at them,

"How many more in the gang?"

"No sabe," answered the leader.

"Too bad," said the sheriff. "If you could let us know who they were, I could get word to the boys not to kill at sight. As it is now, they'll be shot."

A flicker passed over the eyes of the foremost

man, evidently a half-breed Mexican and white.

"One of them is my woman," he said.

The sheriff's eyes narrowed. As he knew well, the shooting of a woman would turn public sentiment against the posse.

"I happen to know that you can head them off if you want to," he said, confidently, though this was, of course, only a guess. But he read the answer in the man's eyes.

"Chip," he said, "take the other two men an' get the horses o' four o' these rustlers out o' the corral. Put this chap on a horse, tied good an' solid, an' make him show you where the rest have gone. Don't shoot. We don't want to hurt that woman, but we've got to have all the gang."

The ranchman nodded, and within a few minutes the four horses were caught, saddled, the chief of the gang was placed on horseback, and the party of four disappeared. Meanwhile, the sheriff tightened the bonds of the other three, tied their legs and sat down to watch them. Gavan, who had come forward as soon as the shooting, was over, and who had watched all this without saying a word, now suddenly uttered a loud cry,

"The tracks!"

"What is it, Gavan," asked the sheriff, with-

out taking his eyes off the prisoners, bound as they were.

"The tracks of the Wolf-woman," the boy explained. "I was sure of it!"

"Sure of what?" put in the ranch boss, impatiently.

"Hunch," asked the boy, "can I look around a little?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said the sheriff doubtfully, "but don't go far an' don't get into any trouble. There might be some more of these gentlemen around, you know."

"I'll be careful," rejoined the boy, in a fever of excitement, and he darted off toward the thick brush. Presently, the sheriff and the ranch boss heard a shout of triumph, and, a moment later, the boy appeared dragging a wolf-skin in one hand, and some clumsy looking articles in the other. He produced these first.

"Look, Hunch!" he said, and held them out.

"What are they?" queried the sheriff, puzzled.

"Don't you see?" said the boy. "They're made for fastening to a pony's hoofs, like the shoes that Arctic explorers make for their dogs. Here's a strap to go round the pastern and a regular shoe for the hoof." He turned them over, and

showed them. "And on the other side," he pointed out, "these two rubber pads would look just like the paws of a wolf."

"What are they made of?" queried the sheriff, curiously.

"Old automobile casings and tires melted down, I should say," guessed the boy. "They're tough enough."

"What's the idea?"

"To throw any one off the trail," hazarded Gavan. "If cattle are lost, or maybe a calf killed, and some one chances to see wolf-tracks around, it's a cinch that wolves are going to be blamed, not rustlers."

"You mean," said Thin-lip Jack, "that all these seasons I've been missin' here an' there half a dozen head of cattle an' blamin' the wolves, it's been these pesky cattle-thieves?" He pointed angrily at the men lying on the ground like trussed poultry.

"Looks like it," said the boy. "Here are the wolf-tracks, and there," pointing down the valley, "are your cattle."

"But," he continued, "that isn't all!"

And, with great pride, he exhibited a wolfskin.

"See," said the youngster, "the front legs of

this contraption are fixed up with springs and swivels like on an artificial leg they give soldiers who have been wounded. It's an awful job to run around on hands and knees, but this dodge makes it easy."

And, to show the plan, Gavan threw the skin over his head, put his arms half-way down in the forelegs and began to cavort around.

Despite the gravity of the situation, the two men could not help laughing at the boy.

"Regular wolf-boy!" declared the sheriff, but he had not time to discuss the matter further, when the sound of the returning horses were heard and the four men returned, Chip and the two cowboys each having a prisoner on the saddle before them.

"I'll be shot!" exclaimed the sheriff, "if they haven't got nothin' but a woman and two kids."

Chip rode up gravely and looked down at the sheriff.

"Hunch," he said, seriously, "do you remember those two kids that disappeared half a dozen years ago, an' were supposed to have been eaten by the Wolf-woman?"

"Yes," said the sheriff, "not that I ever took much stock in the story. What of it?"

"These are the two kids."

"So," said the sheriff, and his eye roved from the woman to Gavan, who had stood up, making a curious figure in the wolfskin, with his hands in the forelegs with their artificial arrangements. Then he caught the terror in the woman's eyes, and understood.

"And this," Chip continued, giving a rough shake of the shoulder to the figure huddled on the saddle in front of him, "is the Wolf-woman."

The ranch boss gave a short laugh.

"Like most of these ghost-yarns," he said, "the werewolf shows up as a trick used by a gang of cattle-rustlers to cover their tracks."

"But why," asked Gavan, turning directly to the woman, "did you try to dig up my cousin's body?"

The prisoner's brown face, half scowling and half afraid, gave no answer.

The sheriff, scornfully, gave the required explanation.

"You hadn't emptied Blue Joe's pockets," he said. "You remember I turned quite a little sum of money over to you the next morning! This woman probably saw the attack o' the mountain lion an' saw you make the grave. She never

thought you would come back to the haunted canyon, an' figured on messin' up the body so that it would look as though it had been torn by a wild animal. Meantime, she would have pocketed the cash. You're a pretty creature, you are!" he ended.

The woman turned suddenly and tried to bite the hand of the man holding her.

The sheriff came a little closer and looked into her eyes.

"Don't let her bite you, Chip," he warned, "you'd better put a gag in her mouth."

"Why?" asked the ranchman, laughing; "she won't hurt me."

"Rabies," answered the sheriff, tersely. "I miss my guess if she hasn't been bitten by a mad wolf some time, an' got the virus. Once in a long while, people become virus-carriers. I've often thought that a lot of those poor people in the Middle Ages who were burned to death as werewolves, because they confessed to havin' the witch-power of turnin' into a wolf an' eatin' human flesh, were simply crazed folk who had been bitten by wolves an' hadn't died of hydrophobia."

"Do wolves go mad, like dogs?" asked Gavan; "I never heard that."

"You can just lay that they do," the sheriff returned. "I remember once gettin' a telephone message to go an' rescue a storekeeper, in a small Mexican village. A mad wolf had walked into the store, just as if it had been a dog belongin' to the place an' started snappin' at the storekeeper. He didn't have a loaded gun in the place, an' though he managed to edge his way to where a couple of revolvers were hangin', all his boxes of ammunition were closed and he couldn't get to them.

"When I got there, the storekeeper was lyin' on a top shelf in his store, mumblin' prayers to all the saints in the calendar, because the shelves were lightly nailed an' he was afraid, every minute, that the nails would pull out an' throw him to the ground into the wolf's jaws.

"As soon as I came to the door the animal rushed at me, but I stopped him, first shot. He was mad, all right. No wolf, unless he had rabies, would walk into a store like that.

"Yes, Gavan, hydrophobia among wolves and coyotes is somethin' to reckon with. There was one very bad outbreak in Wyoming, some years ago. So, Chip, if you take my advice, you'll not run any chances of a bite from the Wolf-woman.

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It's easy enough to make a gag that won't hurt at all."

Then, turning to the two cowboys, the sheriff sent them out with word to the two waiting parties that the cattle-thieves were caught. That night, however, two riders who were unable to give an account of themselves, were caught spurring at full speed from the direction of Ghost Canyon, and, afterwards, were found to belong to the gang.

Of the seven men in the gang, two were Americans and five Mexicans. Evidently they had carried on their cattle-stealing business for a number of years, but, as the leader confessed at the trial, there "was no money in the business since the days of the open range." It was found that the leader was "wanted" for an old crime in Texas, which was the true cause of his having taken up the outlaw life.

Before sentencing them to terms of prison, the judge pointed out that, if they had managed a cattle ranch for the same number of years with the same energy that they had shown in stealing, their actual gains would have been several times as large. Cattle-rustling in the West is almost a lost art.

CHAPTER XII

THE THREE-LEGGED OUTLAW

GAVAN was an important witness in the trial of the cattle-rustlers and his clear and well-handled testimony as to the tracks which he had observed and the means whereby he had reached the conclusion that a cattle-rustlers' gang was operating in Ghost Canyon, earned him the public commendation of the judge.

Not only that, but, a few weeks after, he received a letter offering him his expenses and a stated sum per week to try to track an old outlaw wolf, on the Truchas Mountains, some little distance from the Taos Mountains, but a part of the same Sangre de Cristo Range. There was a bounty of \$1,000 on the head of the wolf, which the rancher stated would be paid in full to the boy if he caught it, but that, even if there were no capture, his time would be well paid for, just the same.

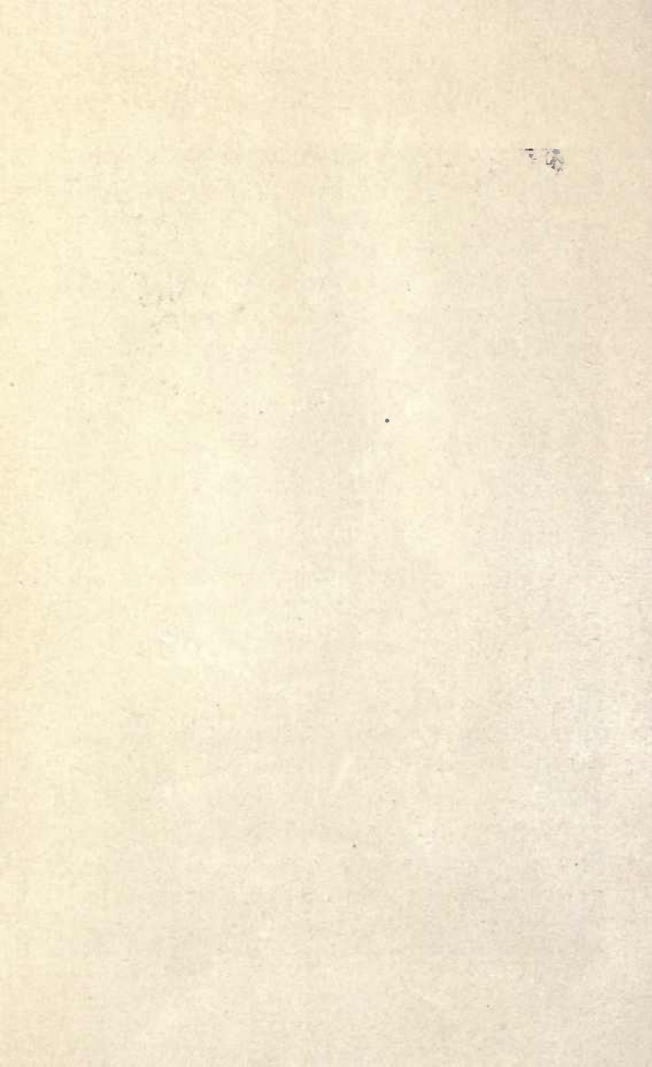
The opportunity was too good to lose, for, if there was one thing that Gavan wanted to do, it was to catch an outlaw wolf. The New Mexico



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

"THE HUNGRY PACK WAS ON THEM!"

Old-World wolves are more daring than those of the American continent, and many travelers on sledges in Russia have been chased. It is the scent of horseflesh which emboldens the pack, rather than the scent of man.



chief of the Biological Survey had told him that there was no animal in the world so suspicious as an old gray wolf which had once been nipped in a trap. Gavan, remembering his experience with the wolverine, thought that the latter could outdo and out-think any other creature of the wild. Now, he was to test his wits against "the three-legged outlaw of the Truchas."

This time Gavan was alone. He was to have no help from Quick Feather, none from friends or neighbors. He was in unfamiliar country. With a handful of traps, and his rifle, he was set in the middle of a range of mountains and told to find a wolf.

In this difficulty, experience told.

The cattleman, who had hired him, wanted to take the lad at once to the place where the tracks had last been seen but Gavan shook his head.

"That isn't any good," he said. "You can't trail a wolf. Maybe, if there were a slight snowfall on the ground, or if all the world was covered with dust, it could be done. But, from what I've seen and read, it's only in books that the 'wily trapper sees a mark on the ground and tracks the animal to its den.' It sounds great—but things aren't done that way."

“What d’ you figure on doin’, then?” asked the cattleman.

“First of all,” said the boy, “I want to study the lay of the country. A wolf won’t always follow a certain trail, but he’ll generally keep a kind of a route. An old outlaw, Mr. Winon told me, often travels forty to sixty miles in a night, and doesn’t always go in the same direction, by a long shot. So I’ve got a circle, probably seventy or eighty miles across, in which to hunt for him, and it’s no use starting until I get the hang of that circle. Our friend the ‘three-legged-outlaw’ has got a certain system of trails of his own, that’s sure. Before I can do a thing in trapping, I’ve got to find those out.”

The cattleman leaned back and looked at the boy.

“Youngster,” he said, “I believe you’ve got brains in your head. Everybody, so far, that I’ve had startin’ out after that old outlaw has wanted to trail him. They haven’t any one of them succeeded. You talk as if you had some sort of system.”

“Well,” the boy said, “Mr. Winon of the Biological Survey, taught me all I know about catching coyotes, and I guess the wolf is the same

problem, only a whole lot harder. That's all the system I have. I'll let you know as soon as I have anything definite to say."

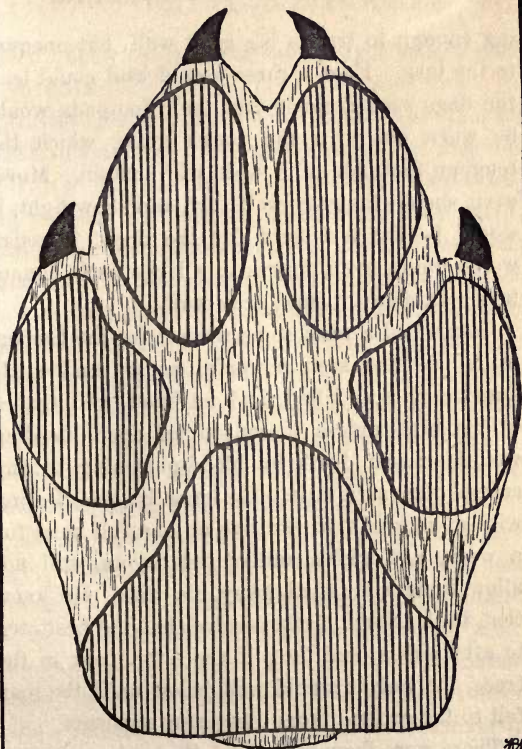
Settling his traps and affairs in the little tent and kit which he had brought over on the old pack-pony, Gavan started an exploration of the territory. In general, it was not unlike the character of the Taos Mountains, and remembering the training that he had received from Winon and from McLeod, as well as the topographical teaching he had received from the Forest Supervisor two years before, when he had commenced to dig the irrigation ditch, soon the boy began to trace the lay of the creek valleys and the general relation of the mountain peaks one to the other.

On one of the lower saddle-backs of the range he sat for some time, motionless, studying the landscape. Apparently, there was neither sound nor motion over the wide wilderness, with the exception of a sharp-shinned hawk soaring in the blue. But, as the boy knew well, along the secret trails leading through the thicket and skirting the boulders, life went on with an intensity all the deeper and more stringent for the seal of silence laid upon it. The small fugitive kindreds moved noiselessly about their affairs, foraging,

mating, sometimes even playing, but ever watchful, a sleepless vigilance the price of each hour's breath, while, even more furtive, but more intermittent in their watchfulness, the hunting and the blood-loving kindred followed the trails.

Squirrels and chipmunks, the most fearless of the tree-creatures, showed themselves from time to time, but the wood rats lay hid; the pocket-gophers and the prairie dogs ran from their holes, but the meadow-mice were still; far down the valley could be heard the sonorous smack as a beaver's tail gave the warning signal of secrecy, but the porcupine ambled unconcernedly about his business, knowing the protection of his terrible spines; the Manzana and Rocky Mountain cottontail rabbits nibbled watchfully, knowing that almost every carnivorous creature looked on them as prey; while, alone of all creatures, the Arizona skunk slowly wandered from his hollow log in search of grasshoppers, field-mice or ground-birds' eggs, secure in the knowledge that every carnivore would give him a wide berth.

The Airedales lay at the boy's feet blinking and sunning themselves, for Gavan had brought them for company rather than for the especial needs of the trip. He knew that the dogs would be will-



JWP

Timber or Gray Wolf

Hind-foot track of animal about 80 lbs weight

ing enough to trail a big gray wolf, but unequal to the task. Even a three-legged wolf could lead the dogs such a chase that their footpads would be worn out over the rough going which the tougher footpads of a wolf will sustain. Moreover, should the gray wolf turn and show fight, it would be the last fight for the dogs. Russian wolf-hounds, even, unless in a large pack, cannot tackle an eighty-pound gray wolf.

Gavan had a wholesome respect for the timber-wolf. He had seen powerful horses and cattle hamstrung and killed, and he knew well that a wolf's bite, unless it caused an open bleeding wound, means death by blood-poisoning to any animal that suffers it. He knew he was dealing with an animal that can live on one full meal for a week, and which, unlike the coyote, will not allow hunger to steal away his wits. He knew that, in the North, timber-wolves had not hesitated to attack men, and that, if the latter took to the trees, the wolves would wait below until the man fell to the ground from hunger or exposure.

There were the mountains. Somewhere, among those swelling heights, was hidden the wolf. Along some trail, that night, he would begin his tireless search for food, never twice in the same

place, rarely twice in the same way. Where was that trail?

Gavan did not belittle his task. He was to tackle an animal which could smell the iron of a trap in the ground as surely as a truffle-seeking dog can distinguish the infinitesimally small difference in smell between the various forms of fungi, two or three feet underground. He was to outwit an animal which could scan the ground as it trotted along and tell whether a grain of dust had been disturbed or a blade of grass trodden aside. He was to catch an experienced traveler of the wild whose eight years of life had been ceaselessly devoted to the lesson of learning to fear anything and everything strange.

The boy had learned, by now, the wide difference between the kind of trapping which the Biological Survey had undertaken to do, and that of the average trapper for fur. He knew that whereas, in New Mexico, when the Biological Survey began its work, four years before, at least a thousand timber-wolves were roaming the state, not more than half a dozen cattle-killing wolves existed now.

Blind chance had nothing to do with his present quest. He could not set a trap, on the chance

that some passing animal might blunder in. He was not looking for the blunderer. He was after one definite creature, one outlaw, one criminal of the wolf world. In a sense, all gray wolves in civilized sections must be exterminated, for the gray wolf is a killer by nature and habit, but there was only one gray wolf whose hide Gavan coveted, that of the "three-legged outlaw of the Truchas Mountains."

A week later he went back to the cattleman.

"Caught Three-legs yet?" the latter asked jocularly.

"I'm just about ready to begin," the lad replied, seriously. "I just wanted to ask you if I've got the lay of the land here, right."

He laid down on the table a rough drawing of the country, done in topographical contours, as the Forest Supervisor had taught him.

"As I see it," said the boy, "there's one stream flowing this way, with a little canyon running into it, which meanders down between a bald and a heavy yellow pine slope—" and thus proceeded to describe the section, as he had judged it from his reconnaissance. The ranchman followed him with interest, correcting him from time to time,



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

A FIGHT AGAINST AWFUL ODDS.

Once roused by blood, a pack of grey wolves of the Far North, in winter time, will even dare to attack man. On foot and without firearms, there is little hope of escape.

and giving him the names of the peaks and rivers, which Gavan noted down in his sketch map.

"Now," said the boy, "so far as I understand, Mr. Three-Legs has been seen about all over this stretch."

"Exactly," said the cattleman, sarcastically. "It's quite easy. He's there. All you have to do, is to find him."

Gavan ignored the sarcasm.

"Now," he continued, "if this were a question of a cattle-killing bear, we'd have to take up the possibility of travel over slopes heavily covered with fallen timber or unusually rocky. But with a wolf, it isn't so. A wolf doesn't hunt through fallen timber, and he hates stones. I should think a wolf with one leg a little lame, would be even more particular to travel an easy trail. Besides," the boy continued, "Mr. Winon told me that once a wolf takes to killing cattle and sheep, he's apt to find it easier work than chasing wild animals and will stick to that end of it."

"Three-legs is lookin' after the sheep, sure enough," the owner of the ranch grimly declared.

"All right, then," the boy continued; "it's no use working out a trail between the sections of

the range where there aren't many cattle, but rather between the places where cattle and sheep do gather. Now, that's what I want from you. Can you give me an idea whereabouts the largest bunches of stock are gathered?"

The cattleman stared at the youngster in surprise.

"You act like an old hand instead of a kid," he said. "Where did you get all that dope?"

"I got most of it from Mr. Winon, of the Biological Survey, and one of his hunters," the boy answered, "although an old Indian, who's been one of my best friends all my life, taught me a good many things, too."

"Well, you learnt them," the other ranchman answered, emphatically. "It's queer that you know Winon so well, for I got a letter from him the other day. I wrote him, oh, I guess it must have been a month ago, tellin' him about this Three-legs, because I know he likes to keep posted on every wolf in the State, just like the captain of a ship at sea wants to know where the icebergs are. An', just yesterday, he wrote me sayin' that he would try to come up here in a few days."

Gavan's eyes sparkled with a sudden zest.

"Wouldn't I like to beat him to it!" he exclaimed.

"Well," said the cattleman, "maybe you will," and he turned to mark on the boy's chart the localities where the cattle generally browsed. Then, together, they studied the map so made, and Gavan pointed out that, owing to the lay of the mountains and valleys, the lines of travel that the outlaw lobo would have to follow must be along natural lines.

"A wolf," he justly said, "isn't going to run up one side of a hill and run down the other side of it, when he can keep on the level by going a little round. I wouldn't wonder if we found that Three-legs had a pretty regular lane of travel."

"Maybe," agreed the stock-raiser, "but even after you've narrowed down the field the way you have, I reckon, putting all those lines o' travel end to end, you've a thousand miles o' line."

"Sure," the boy agreed, "but that thousand miles of line has some commanding points, and some of them intersect. If I can find those trails, and especially if I can find out where they intersect, I might set traps there."

"What bait?" asked the cattleman, for he was anxious to find out the boy's methods.

"None!" declared the boy. "What's the use of stale bait to a wolf who makes his dinner off fresh mutton?"

"Give him mutton!" came the prompt reply. "I'll let you have all the sheep you want."

"No good at all," responded Gavan. "Sheep don't hang around alone. If I should stake a lamb near the trap, Three-legs would make a wide circle around that lamb, put his head on one side and say to himself:

"'I never saw a little lamb, which had lost its mother, that didn't run around and look for her. This lamb doesn't run around. Something queer about that lamb! This is no place for me!'

"And not only wouldn't Mr. Three-legs tackle that lamb, but he would change his trail so as to avoid the place where something queer had happened once. So, instead of gaining anything, we'd only lose the one piece of information that we had found out, namely, where his trail was."

"How about scent bait?" asked the cattleman.

"That might work with a young wolf," the boy answered, "but it doesn't do much good with an old one. A young wolf is interested in girl wolves, and he likes to know when they are around and where they've gone. He wants to have the

gossip of the neighborhood, too, like a coyote, and you can sometimes catch him on the smell telephone. But with an old outlaw wolf, I'm not sure that it would do. Even if the scent bait were so cleverly handled that Mr. Three-legs was fooled into believing the intruder another wolf, he might keep away because he's crippled, or he might generally be a grouchy chap and decide to go where he wouldn't be interfered with."

"Now you're talkin' of Three-legs just as if he were a man, an' thinkin' in a man's way," retorted the stock-raiser.

"Mr. Winon told me," answered Gavan, quoting his constant authority, "that you've got to assume to a gray wolf as much woods-brain as you have. Quick Feather told me, that a wolf has got a lot more wolf-brain than a man has. So I'm trying to figure it out with both kinds of brain."

"You'll need 'em both for Three-legs," the cattleman answered.

With his map corrected and made out, and his trail locations clearly in his head, Gavan went back for a continued study of the mountains. He took no traps, at first, nothing but his canvas sheet, and if ever he left his pony's back to examine the

ground, he did so from the canvas. He ate his lunch in the saddle, never making fire, and was careful not to allow a piece of paper to fly away nor a particle of cooked food to fall. The crumbs, fish-bones, and suchlike he wrapped up and put in his pocket, not throwing them away until he was near his camp.

"I don't intend to give Mr. Three-legs any warning," he said to himself.

At last, by a careful study of all the possible passages in and through the mountains, Gavan decided upon four trails, each of these evidently used by a wolf, probably the outlaw, and little, if ever, used by cattle.

Along these trails Gavan decided to make his blind sets.

Now, if ever, the minutest care was needed!

His traps had been buried in the earth, ever since he had come to the Truchas Mountains, for although many trappers declare that an animal cannot smell iron, Gavan remembered that Mr. Winon had said to him that it was impossible to be too careful, and that a large part of the art of trapping consisted in a most scrupulous attention to detail.

"The difference between trapping the way the

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Biological Survey wants it done," the expert had once said, "and the way that old-time trappers used to do it, doesn't lie in the kind of traps, nor in the cleverness of the trappers. It's the difference between a work of art and a clumsy job. Good modern trapping consists in knowing just exactly what ought to be done, and doing it with the same care and patience, every time."

Gavan had no intention of putting Three-legs on his guard by any little slip-up. One trap set too near the surface, so that a strong wind might blow off the earth and expose it, one trap with the pan set too lightly, so that a coyote or a rabbit might spring it; one trap in a cattle track where it might be set off by a blundering steer; one trap in a grass set, disturbing sod so that a wolf might be suspicious and worry round till he found the chain or the trap; one careless piece of forgetfulness that might leave a human smell; any one thing might spoil all his work, for Three-legs would discover that an enemy was on his track, and he would not only be warier than ever, but probably would move, unknown, to another section of the mountains.

With plenty of time at his disposal, the boy only set four traps a day. Each trap was sunk just

the right distance below the ground, each had its springs turned slightly so as to give the greater snugness to the jaws, each had upon the pan a weather-beaten piece of old cloth that had lain out in all weathers and had no smell. Before he left each set, Gavan spent a good five minutes examining it to see whether the most scrupulous inspection could discover any trace of the work.

In five days, he had twenty traps down, all in blind sets. Nowhere was there meat or scent to attract the animal. Nowhere, did he move a stick or stone in such a way that a wolf would have to put his foot in the trap. That was often a good plan, Gavan knew, but he would take no chances with Three-legs.

These twenty traps covered a ride of over thirty miles, the utmost limit that the boy could ride on each alternate day. Moreover, he had placed each set in such a place that it could be seen from far away, and thus it was not necessary for him to ride close to the traps to see if they had been sprung. He re-shod his horse—for he had taken the shoes off when making his reconnaissances of the country, lest the smell of the steel should suggest something to Three-legs—and, with a field-

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glass, made his rounds daily, never going near the wolf-trails which he had discovered.

Day after day passed fruitlessly. The boy was successful, in that no animal touched or sprang his traps, but there was never the sight of a giant wolf struggling in them.

On the ninth day, returning to camp, Gavan reached one of his usual lookouts and reached for his field-glass.

His hand stopped midway.

Something was moving down there on the trail beside the fallen rock!

His hands shaking with excitement, Gavan raised and leveled his field-glasses.

A wolf! Surely a wolf.

A moment later—

“Caught!” he cried, and shouted with delight.

Then, almost forgetting prudence in his eagerness, for he feared every minute that the wolf might break away—though it was a No. 4½ trap with a jaw-spread of eight inches—Gavan set his pony down the steep mountain-side.

As long as the wolf was in sight, he was content, though his heart was beating fast; but when the foliage hid the point in the trail, he could

scarcely keep from using the spurs, his fears of the outlaw's escape grew to such a height.

At last, at long last, the slope was descended, and Gavan struck across the short flat at a full gallop, his rifle in his hand, ready to jump off and shoot, if necessary.

But the trap held.

This was no coyote to slink to the farthest end of the chain on the approach of an enemy!

The big gray wolf growled, and advanced as far as the chain would allow, showing his teeth savagely.

Gavan, on foot, his rifle ready, came forward slowly, admiringly.

Whether Three-legs or no, this was a veritable timber-wolf! This was the gray scourge!

Well could the boy realize that even a full-grown horse or steer might suffer from the fangs of such a brute, standing 5 feet 3 inches from root (not tip) of tail to the extremity of the nose, 29½ inches high to the top of the shoulders, with a girth about the body of 34 inches. Its weight was over a hundred pounds.¹

¹ Accurate measurements of timber wolves vary widely. This specimen was measured by the author in Calgary, Canada. These figures would be a little large for a wolf caught as far south as New Mexico.



Courtesy of "Outing" Magazine.

TIMBER WOLF CAUGHT IN TRAP.

Though rarer than coyotes, gray wolves are numerous throughout the United States, especially in the west and north.



Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service.

WHERE THE MARE MUST WATCH HER COLT EVERY MINUTE.

The favorite food of the gray wolf is horseflesh, and small hunting-packs cause great losses to bands of horses on the open range. A straggling foal is sure to be picked up, and even full-grown animals are not immune from night attacks.



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The boy came closer and saw that the left fore-foot—it was the right fore-foot which was held in the trap—had once before been pinched, and though, evidently, the leg was as serviceable as ever, the toes were bunched and deformed.

This was Three-legs, without a doubt.

A desire, so violent as almost to be reckless, took the boy, to bring the gray wolf back alive, as he had done the wolverine, but better sense prevailed. Choking back a lump in his throat—for it seemed like murder to kill an animal in a trap—Gavan set his rifle to his shoulder, took careful aim, and fired.

Three-legs fell as a stone falls from a cliff.

Gavan waited a few minutes before advancing. Such a foe was not to be approached temerari-ously.

He took out his skinning-knife, and then halted.

Why not take the animal back whole, where it could be weighed?

He went over to his pony, and led the animal to a tree, near to the dead wolf, the horse whinnying and trembling with fear, and ever and anon trying to jerk away from his master. But Gavan was expecting this, and held firm. He tied the horse to the tree by the halter, and to make

doubly sure, made a second fastening with his lariat. Then he put the hobbles on, in case a furious jerk should break the halter itself.

By now the wolf was surely dead, but Gavan did not release the foot from the trap. No, he wanted to show the wolf, with the trap still on his foot. Using his small ax, he dug up the stake.

But how to get the beast on the horse? A hundred-pound lift was more than the boy could manage. At last he bethought him of a plan. Cutting down two trees, he made a sort of horse-stall, under a good-sized tree. Then he fastened the lariat to the wolf, untied the pony, and made the latter pull the dead wolf near to this tree. He then retied the horse, as firmly as before, in the impromptu stall, and again hobbled him.

Then, taking the lariat, he threw one end of it over a branch, and cutting a forked and pointed stick about eight feet high, he stuck this into the root of the tree and under the armpit of the wolf, and commenced to pull. The body of the wolf rose upright on the forked stick, until the latter was straight, and then, with one more pull, the forked stick fell forward, landing the body of the wolf

fairly across the haunches of the horse, right behind the saddle.

Followed then as pretty an exhibition of kicking as Gavan had ever seen, but, before the pony had succeeded in freeing himself from the wolf, Gavan had snatched a couple of turns of the lariat around the body of the wolf. The pony, usually a quiet and much ridden beast, soon quieted down, though still trembling violently.

Gavan fastened the body of Three Legs so that an outlaw bronc could not have freed himself from the burden, and then leaped into the saddle, breaking out in joyous yells every once in a while.

At the ranch-house he met the cattleman, who could barely contain himself, when he saw Gavan come up at a full gallop with the body of the giant wolf slung across the pony's back.

"Who do you suppose is here?" he said at last, when the whole story had been told to him in detail.

"Mr. Winon?" queried the boy, hopefully.

The stock-raiser nodded.

"Don't say anything to him!" said the boy.

"Can't I go right in?"

The cattleman grinned, helped the boy unfasten

the body of the wolf and carried it with him to the threshold of the ranch-house.

Then Gavan burst open the door and plunged in, dragging after him, with many a grunt, the body of the wolf.

“Do I get a job?” he burst out.

The Biological Survey expert started at the cry, and, turning around, saw the flushed face of the boy and the figure of the giant wolf on the floor.

“Is it ‘Three-Legs of the Truchas?’ ” he asked.

“Yes,” answered the cattleman from behind.

“It’s Three-Legs right enough!”

“You bet you get the job,” came the answer.

“Consider yourself a U. S. Government Trapper from this day on!”

THE END

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